

CHILDREN OF THE — — MOTHERLAND.



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FOREWORD.

This book has been written for the inspiration of Indian youths and maidens, on whom the future of India depends. It tells of deeds heroic in war and peace, culled from the annals of the past, and it seeks so to tell the story of these deeds that Hīndū and Musalmān and Sikh may feel a common glory in them all, as all were wrought by children of the common Motherland. For it is by such memories that nations grow, and the proud Rājput Chiefs, and Guru Nānak, and mighty Akbar, and gallant Shivājī, are common property, and belong not only to Hīndū, or Musalmān, or Sikh.

Nor only of men are heroic stories told, for India has women as noble as her men, and her daughters shine out splendidly, telling what Indian women may be, from Sāvitrī of the elder days to Ahalya Bai in modern time, but a century and a half ago.

The stories are written by different pens; Bhagavān Dās and his son Shri Prakāsha—who helped by translating some old Rājput annals sent by Rai Bahādur Shyām Sunḍar Lāl, who also sent some useful corrections of the story of Mīrā Bai—and Jogendra Singh, and Dhan-
hatṭar Singh, and J. M. Davies, and myself, have been the scribes. Some information about Ahalya Bai from a Mahrāṭhā source we owe to Yashwant V. Praḍhan.

Out of the great mines whence these few gems have been digged, many other miners may bring jewels yet more rare, and many books like this, and better far, should be written with pens dipped in love and fire, that Indian youths and maidens may learn aright the story of their Motherland.

May the volume serve the Mother, at whose Feet it is laid in reverence and in love.

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ANNIE BESANT.

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PART I.

SOME OF HER SONS.



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER I.

IN THE FAR-OFF PAST.

No country can be really great that does not strike its roots into the past, whose children do not draw their early inspiration from the stories of the men and women who worked, and sang, and suffered for the Motherland, which has given to them also birth, that they too may also work, and sing, and, if need be, suffer for her.

Boys and Girls of India, for whom this book is written by several lovers of India! the stories told herein are the stories of the heroes and the heroines who were your ancestors, and made the greatness of the land which is your land as it was theirs. When you read of their courage and their honor, of their strength and their tenderness, say to yourselves: "This was an Indian, and I am an Indian too." When you look back over the long splendid past, say: "This is what my India was, and what I will work to make her once again, God helping me." And if any should say in your hearing that India is fallen, and is no longer great, then promise in your own heart, by

And now let us look back and see whence come the greatest of the Indian races, the Rājaputras, whose regal sway extended over the Panjāb and the lands now called the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and over Behār eastwards, and westwards over Kāthiawār, or Saurāshṭra, a name which survives in Surat, and even into Sindh. Later, pressed back by the Musalmān invaders, their rule became confined to Rājputāna, which bears their name, but in the early days they ruled all northern India.

The pure Rājaputras belong to two original lines, the line of the Sun, Sūryavamsha, and the line of the Moon, Chandravamsha, called also Somavamsha and Induvamsha. These are said to descend severally from Vivasvān, the Sun, and Soma, the Moon. The Solar race has for its progenitor Vaivasvata Manu, who incarnated in the new human race, and sent Ikṣhvāku, his son, as the leader of the first Āryan immigration into India. Soma, the Deva ruling the Moon, took Tārā, a Devī belonging to the planet Bṛhaspati, Jupiter, away from her own home, and from them came forth Buḍḍha, Mercury, who married Ilā, the Earth. This is the ancient way of telling how from other planetary evolutions came some

the Moon, and from the planet Bṛihaspati, and later still from the planet Buddha, came Elders to guide the young humanity, and One from Buddha, who incarnated in humanity, was said to have taken Ilâ, the Earth, to wife. From that glorious progenitor came the Chandravamsha. And these are the two chief races of Râjaputras.

Thirty-six royal race, Râjakulas, were recognised as branches of the Sûryavamsha and Chandravamsha, and all these had sub-branches, called Shâkâs. Of Sûryavamsha were the Chiefs of Mewâr (Pramaras, driven out by Gehlotes, or Gohilotes, who later took the names Aharyas, and Sheshodîyas), Jaipur (Kachwahas), Mârwâr (Pîpra Gehlotes, driven out by Rahtores), Bikanir, Nissîda or Nerwâr (among whose Chiefs was Nala, husband of Damayanti) Amber, Bundi, Kotah, Kanauj (Rahtores), Dhâr, Mhow, Ujjain, Suru, Kalian, Multân, Ajmere (Chohans), Mundore (Puriharas), Mâlhwâ (Pramaras), and Anhulwarra (Solankis), all tracing back to Râmachandra, or His brothers; of these the four Agnikulas—Pramara, Purihara, Solanki or Chaluk, and Chohan, names ever to be met with in Râjput story—descended from Takṣha, son of Bharata, the brother of Râmachandra. Of Chandravamsha came the Chiefs of Jessulmeer, Kutch-Bhuj, Kerowli, and Delhi tracing back to Bându and Yadu. Hem

Gehlote, and Rahtore, and Chohan, and the Moon-born Râjakulas of Pândava and Tuar.

We may go, after this bird's-eye view, a little more into detail.

Vivasvân, the Sun, was the Father of Manu—
 Vaivasvata Manu—and Manu had for eldest son
 Ikṣhvâku, who founded the city of Ayodhyâ,
 where his descendants ruled for ages. One hun-
 dred sons had Ikṣhvâku, of whom the eldest,
 Vikukshi, most concerns us, for from him, in the
 28th generation from Vivasvân, was born Satya-
 vrata, or Trishanku, whom the Rishi Vishvâmitra
 lifted up to Svarga in his mortal body; and from
 him Harishchandra, the noble King who valued
 truth before crown, and child and wife; and in
 the 38th generation Sagara, whose sons were
 burnt up; and in the 42nd generation was Bhagi-
 rata, who brought down Gangâ, who fell upon
 Shiva's head, and thence flowed from amid the
 Himâlayas to water India's plains; in the 47th
 generation we note Rituparna, the friend of Nala;
 and in the 52nd generation Bâlîka, who escaped
 the exterminating axe of Parashurâma, and was
 hence called Mûlaka, the root, whence grew again
 the Kṣhatṭriya caste; still we descend the stream,
 and find in the 58th generation Raghu, the great
 grandfather of Râmachandra — therefore called
 often Râchama — and his son Dasharatha, of

ya for time unending, 61st in descent from Vivasvân.

To this same blood belonged the father of Sîtâ, the divine spouse of Shrî Râma, who was of the race of Nimi, the second son of Ikṣhvâku; from Nimi came Janaka, called also Vaidēha, because he was born when his father was bodiless—vidēha, without body, having lost his body—and called also Mithilâ, because he was churned out of his father's body, from Manth, churn. He built the city called after his own name, Mithilâ, corrupted later into Tirhut, and his descendants were the famous Kṣhatṛiya teachers of Âtma-vidyâ. In this line was born Sira-Dhvaṇa, at the touch of whose plough was made manifest the peerless Sîtâ, he who is known as Janaka in the epic of the *Râmâyana*. Thus in the children of Shrî Râma and Sîtâ were joined the two kingly races of Vikukṣhi and Nimi.

The sons of Râmachandra were Kusha and Lava, and from one or other of these two most of the Râjaputṛa Chiefs trace their descent.

The line of Kusha gave birth in the 57th generation to Sumitṛa, where ends the list in the *Bhâgavata Purâna*, whence the foregoing details are taken. In the 20th generation of this line had been born Maru, who retired from the throne, leaving his son to rule, and who is to return when Kaliyuga ends, Lord of the Sûryavamsha, restored

to more than its ancient glory. With Sumit̥ra we reach the Vikramâditya era, B. C. 56, called also the Samvat̥ era, which is used down to the present time. The 49th of this same line was Kriṣṭaṇjaya, who left Koshala, and went westwards to Saurâshṭra, establishing there also the rule of the S̥tryavamsha.

From a branch of the Pramara line came the Mori or Maurya, dynasty, which gave birth to Chandra Mori, or Chandragupta, contemporary with Alexander of Greece, in the end of the 4th century B. C.; of him Ashoka was the grandson, and the sixth of his descendants again was Brehidrita, who was expelled from Magadha (South Behar), and, seizing Dhar and Chittor, left them to his race, who ruled there until Bappa drove them forth from Chittor in A. D. 730, Bappa, to whom we must return presently.

We have already seen that the second royal race, the Chandravamsha, had its origin in a great Sage from the planet Buddha, one who came to incarnate upon earth. His son Purûravas, was wedded to the Apsarâ Urvashî, born as a woman on earth, and from this union sprang several sons, from the eldest of whom, Ayus, through his son Nahusha, and his son Yayâti, sprang the chief Chandravamsha line. Ere following this, we may note in passing, that in the line from Vijaya, another son of Purûra-

vas, were born Jahnvi, who gave to Gangâ her name of Jâhnavî, and Gadhi, father of Vishvâ-mitra, and Jamadagni, father of Parashurâma. Returning to Yayâti, we find he had five sons, of whom Yaðu and Puru are the most important; Puru, the youngest of the five, was his father's heir, and in the line of his descent we note Dush-yanta, sometimes called Dushmanta, who married fair Shakuntalâ, the heroine of the beautiful drama by Kâlidâs, and their son was Bharata; Bharata's line was carried on by the adoption of Bharadvâja, whose great-great-grandson was Rantideva, the wonderful example of self-sacrifice, who said: "I do not ask for the Siddhis, I do not ask for Nirvâna. I only want that I may pervade all beings, and suffer for them all their miseries, that they may be sorrowless." A great-grandson of Bharadvâja was Hastin, who founded Hastinâ-pura on Gangâ. Into this line was born Kuru, one of whose sons was the ancestor of Jarâsandha, who gave Kings to Magadha, and another the ancestor of the brothers Devâpi and Shântanu; Devâpi became an ascetic, and went to join Maru in Kalâpa, whence he will return to lift again the Chandravamsha, in days yet to come. Shântanu was the father of Bhîshma, and the grandfather of Dhritarâshtra, Pâṇdu and Viḍura. The Pâṇdavas founded Indraprastha on the Yamunâ, and there reigned Yudhishtira the righteous, who,

when he resigned his throne, put thereon Parikṣhit, son of Abhimanyu and grandson of Arjuna. The descendants of Parikṣhit ruled in Indraprastha, till Râjpâl was slain by a Kumaon Prince, Sukmanṭa, and he in his turn by Vikramâditya, a period, according to the chronicles, of 2915 years. Vikramâditya, a Tuar, in which race was united the blood of the Pândavas and Yâdavas, transferred the capital to Avânti, or Ujjain, but Indraprastha regained its dignity, when the throne, eight centuries later, was mounted by another Tuar, Anangapâl Tuar, who rebuilt it in A. D. 792, and called it Dehli, or Delhi; as Delhi it remained the Tuar capital for more than four centuries; in A. D. 1164, another Anangapâl resigned the throne of Parikṣhit in favour of his grandson Prithvirâj, a son of the Chohan race, one of the Agnikula—fit son of that fiery race, a man of fire, who, slain, left Delhi desolate, a prey to the victorious Muslim.

We turn back again to Yayâti, from whose eldest son, Yaðu, descended another famous line; Yaðu was the father of Kroshtu, whose 26th descendant was Maḍhu, and his 39th Vṛishṇi, the grandfather of Akrura and of Viḍuratha; from Viḍuratha, the seventh in descent was Vasudeva, father of Shrî Kṛishṇâ, who made glorious for all time the Yâdava line, and whose names of Vâsudeva, Mâdhava, and Vârshneya, are familiar to every reader of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF MEWAR.

Warriors were they, the Râjaputras, generation after generation, heroism their blood, loyalty their breath. They swore, as their most binding oaths: "Gaddi kâ ân," "By the Throne;" "Ya sil kâ ân," "By this Weapon," with hand grasping the belt-dagger; "Dhâl turwâr kâ ân," "By this Sword and Shield." The Râjaputrîs, the royal daughters, were fit mates for these sons of Kings; daughters, wives, mothers of warriors were they, prizing honor above safety, holding chastity dearer than life.

Among the Râjakulas stands high the name of the great line that now rules in Udaipur, and much of Râjput story clusters round it, since of all the Chiefs who faced and fought the Muslims, the Mahârânâ of Mewâr was ever the most unbending. "Regent of Mahâdeva," or "Ekling kâ Dewân," Regent of Eklinga, is he, wearing the necklace of lotus seeds and braided hair. "Yogîndra," "Lord of Yogîs" is one of his titles; he is "Hindua Surâj," "Sun of Hindus," child of the Sûryavamsha, heir of Râmachandra's line. Alone has the Rânâ of Mewâr never bowed his head in homage before

a conqueror, nor "compromised honor for safety" before a triumphant foe. Stripped of realm many a time, he has ever regained it; chased into desert and mountain, he has ever found a fastness from which to descend, reconquering; to-day he holds the central lands his warrior ancestors have held from immemorial ages; much, truly, has been rent away, but the central State remains. Who does not know the story of the Râṇâ who, summoned to wed his daughter to a mighty Prince not of his own faith, sent back as answer his naked sword: "This is the only daughter I have to wed."

We may note, in passing, that the title of Râṇâ, or Mahârâṇâ, so familiar in later time, was not borne by the Chiefs of Mewâr in their earlier days. Bappa, who began their rule in Chitṭor, was called Râwul, and his descendants bore the same title, until, in the 13th century, the reigning Prince, Rahup, who succeeded to Chitṭor in A. D. 1201, assailed the Râṇâ Makul, the Puriharî Chief of Mundore, and taking him prisoner, wrested from him part of his dominions, and assumed to himself his title of Râṇâ, ever thereafter borne by the Lords of Mewâr.

To this line we turn. It will be remembered that the 57th and last name in the line of Kusa, as given in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, is Sumitṛa, B. C. 56. and that the 49th of this same line was

Kritāñjaya, who, leaving Koshala, conquered Saurāshṭra, and there established himself as ruling Chief. His line was assailed and driven out by Kanaksen, a descendant of Lava, son of Rāmachandra, to whom is ascribed the building of Lavakoṭe, or Lobkoṭe, now Lahore. Kanaksen left Lavakote for Dvārakā in the 2nd century of the Christian era and his descendants reigned in Saurāshṭra from A. D. 144 to A. D. 524. from Saurāshṭra they were driven out by the Parthians, when Sillāditya, the then ruling Chief, lost the seven-headed horse, Saptāshva, lent to him by his far off ancestor, the Sun. In his capital, Ballabhipura—near its site is the modern Bhavnagar—bubbled up a holy fountain, Sūrya-Kuṇḍa, and through its pure water would rise, in answer to a secret Sūryamantra, the splendid celestial steed; and when he was bestridden by Sillāditya, what foe might face the fury of his trampling hoofs? But alas! a traitor minister gave to an enemy the story of the rising of the horse, and, for large bribe, stole by night to the fountain, and poured into it the blood of a slaughtered cow. So when Sillāditya would ride forth against his foes, besieging Ballabhipura, and standing by the fountain cried aloud: “O Saptāshva, O Saptāshva, come!” and breathed his mantra softly, only the polluted waters sobbed a sorrowful negative, and no bright Sun-steed rose, whinnying to his call.

Then Sillâḍitya, dauntless though Sun-rejected, girded on his sword, and called his nobles round him, and plunged into the opposing hosts; by way of their lance-points he travelled home to his father, with a goodly retinue of Râjaputras, and shone radiant in Svarga, as a good Kṣhatṭriya should. (A. D. 524. Ballabhi era begins from this date, and is the one used in some of the chronicles; much confusion arises from taking dates of this era as signifying dates of the Christian era.)

With him went his wives, save one who was away on pilgrimage, Pushpavati, a daughter of the Pramaras, who then ruled in Chittor, and to Chittor had she gone to worship the Mother, Amba-Bhavâni, in Her chosen home, and to pray Her blessing on the child who, unborn, thus visited the city which was to be the citadel of his descendants. As she was wending her way homewards there fell off her, as death-stroke, the news of her husband's passing; in cave, beside the mountain path, she gave birth to a son, and went by fire to join her beloved in Svarga, leaving her new-born babe in the care of a kindly Brâhminî, named Kumalavati.

The child thus born was named Goha, from Guha, a cave, the cave-born, and sometimes called Grahâḍitya, from which his descendants were named Gohilote. Grahilote, or Gehlote. This

race took various names, as it seized, or was driven from, various districts, in its warlike career, but the line of descent remains unbroken. Settling in Dongurpur, and building Ānandpur, Ahar, the city of bliss, some of its families took the patronymic Āharya. Those who settled in Mārwar, five sons of Bappa, were the Pīpara Gohilotes, or Gohils, and they preceded in Mārwar the Rahtores. The name of Sheshodīya was assumed by those who ruled in Mewar, and was taken from a town founded by a Prince of the house after he was expelled from Chittor, on the spot where he had killed a hare, shasha, from which unimportant fact the town was named, says Tod! This Prince was the same Rahup, who is mentioned above, who mounted the throne of Chittor in A. D. 1201, and took the title of Rānā from the Purihara chief of Mundore.

Wild and proud and bold was Goha, and well he loved the mountain-folk, the Bhils, among whom his childhood found protection. Thus the Bhil and the Rājaputra became close-knitted, and the shield of Mewar has for supporters on one side a Rājput and on the other a Bhil. This shield is now used as the coat of arms at the Rāj-kumār College at Ajmere. To Goha the Bhils gave Edur with its lands, a Bhil cutting his own finger, and with the outpouring blood marking on Goha's forehead the tika of the Chief; and

thus was made the "blood-bond," which none may break. In Eḍur ruled Goha, and his son, and yet five more in regular descent, of whom his namesake Grahāḍiṭya was the last. For against him his subjects rose, and slew him; and his three-year old son, Bappa, was saved and carried away to Bhandar by a descendant of the same Brāhmaṇa family who had, seven generations before, saved Goha, son of the widowed Rāṇī Pushpavaṭī. From Bhandar, a little later, the child was taken to the deserts of Parassur, where ruled the Solanki race; here, at the foot of the three-peaked mountain lies the town of Nagendra (Nagda), the sanctuary of Mahādeva, "Lord of the serpent" of wisdom. But ten miles south of this ancient fane lies Udaipur, where still the Mahārāṇās rule.

Here Bappa passed his childhood, tended the cows, and played many a merry jest, preserved in popular traditions. Among these is one which tells how he wedded the daughter of the Chief of Nagendra, and six hundred of her playmates, by tying her scarf to his, and by their all dancing together round an old mango-tree. In consequence of this prank, Bappa had to fly the country. His affectionate service of an old hermit, devoted to the worship of Shiva, to whom daily he took milk and flowers, had meanwhile brought him many blessings; the Sage taught

him religion and morality, and gave him the sacred thread, naming him the "Regent of Ek-linga," the title, as said above, ever afterwards borne by his descendants. Then to him came Durgâ the mighty, and bestowed on him the weapons wrought by Vishvakarma, the celestial architect and worker in metals—shield, lance, bow, quiver and arrows, and a mighty sword, heavy as an ordinary man; and this She bound on him, and took his oath of service, and thus became "the Mother," for all his race. Another sword, double-edged, was given to him by the hermit Goruknâth, and it is one of these very swords which is still worshipped in Mewâr.

.Bappa, by his mother, was nephew of the Mori Chief of Chittor, of the Pramara Râjakula, Lords of Mâlwa, and to him he betook himself, now fifteen years of age; this Chief was powerful, ruling over many clans, and he gave Bappa welcome and bestowed on him an estate, causing fierce jealousy among his nobles. But this jealousy did not last long, for the Musalmâns were invading Râjputâna, having conquered Sindh, and Bappa, with his warrior nature and his celestial weapons, seemed as a leader sent by Durgâ Herself to guard Her land from the invasions of the foreigners. So Bappa, hotly claiming leadership, was granted it by his uncle, and the Mewâr nobles followed him, grudgingly and unwillingly; but

Bappa, taking the field, drove the enemy before him, captured Gajni, and became the hero of the army, carried away by his prowess. The Mewâr nobles turned their wrath against their own sovereign, renounced their allegiance to the Mori Chief, and accepted Bappa as their ruler ; and, returning with them to Chittôr, he assaulted and took the town, drove away the Chief—an ungrateful return for his generous welcome—and became the Lord of Mewâr, bequeathing to his descendants his celestial sword, and his titles of “Eklinga kâ Dewân,” and “Hindua Surâj,” Sun of the Hindus; and still despite all vicissitudes, and many a temporary expulsion, and many an abiding in mountain wilds and rocky fastnesses, his descendants reign in Mewâr, and Chittôr, though in ruins, is still theirs.

Bappa ruled long with skill and might, and spread wide his rule ; at length, he placed his son on the gadđî, and went forth and travelled into Turushka, Turkestan, and there, conquering, ruled for many years ; and then became an ascetic, and died in the Himâlayas, repentant, we trust, for his crime against his uncle.

Bappa was born A. D. 715, or Ballabhi era 191—191 years after the sack of Ballabhipur and the death of Sillāditya, *i. e.* A. D. 524 ; this would give A. D. 730 or 731 for the establishment of his throne at Chittôr ; the date is variously

given from A. D. 714 to A. D. 731, and the exact year is not important. But the era is important, and is definitely marked, for in A. D. 713 the Musalmān invaders, under Muhammad Benkasim, crossed the Indus, conquered Sindh, and pressed onwards into Rājputāna; it was these invaders that Bappa faced and routed, when a lad of fifteen, as we have seen, thus beginning the long struggle in which the Rānās of Chittor fought the Muslim arms, a struggle in which heroic deeds were wrought, alike by Hindu and by Musalmān, a struggle to which both may look back with pride, as part of the making of modern India.



CHAPTER III.

THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF THE PĀNDAVAS.

The Musalmân invaders ruled the Panjâb; in A. D. 1001, Mâhmud, the Afghân Governor of Khorâsân, had invaded the land, and in a great battle at Peshâwar had defeated Jayapâl, the Râjput Chief of Lahore, who, too proud to outlive his fame, placed his son Anaṅgapâl on the gaḍḍî, and went by fire to Svarga. Anaṅgapâl, though aided by the gallant Chiefs of Delhi, Kanauj, Ujjain, and other States, sustained another great defeat eight years later; further raids followed, and in A. D. 1021 Lahore was wrested from the son of Anaṅgapâl, and became a Muslim stronghold. When Mâhmud died in 1030, he had raided India no less than seventeen times. After his death many quarrels rent the Musalmâns, and, while they fought each other, the Râjput Chiefs followed the same evil policy; whenever they had not a war with the Muslim on hand, they kept their swords sharp against each other.

Jayachandra, Prince of Kanauj, was, by his mother, a grandson of Anaṅgapâl, the Tuar Lord of Delhi; grandson also of Anaṅgapâl by his

mother, was Prithviraj, and on his father's side he was a Chohan, son of the Chief of Ajmere. Anangapāl chose Prithvirāj as his heir, and proclaimed him his successor when the child had numbered but eight summers. When Prithvirāj mounted the gaddi of Delhi, on the abdication of Anangapāl in S. 1220 (A. D. 1164), Jayachandra put forth his equal claim, and bitter feud arose between the two proud Princes. Round them grouped themselves the hot-blooded Rājput Chiefs in rival hosts, Samarsi, Lord of Mowār, siding with Prithvirāj, whose sister he had married, and the Purihara Rājakula of Mundore standing shoulder to shoulder with Jayachandra. Alas! around Jayachandra not only Rājaputras were gathered. See, the Semitic faces of the Pathāns mingle with the Āryan faces of the Rājputs, and in the fratricidal strife the Musalmān, eager to make firm his footing, takes a willing part. Muhammad Ghori is watching from Lahore, his eye upon the throne of Delhi.

Prithvirāj is preparing to march against Jayachandra, and Samarsi is away, measuring swords with Shāhbuḍīn, his ally. As Prithvirāj is giving his commands for battle, a youth, not quite fifteen, a kinsman of the Chief, so handsome that they call him Alamkāra—the ornament—comes forward eagerly, that handsome boy's face of his flushed with a vexed excitement, and prays insist-

ently that he be given the leading of the first charge against the enemy.

Prithvirāj, full of surprise and tenderness, asks him the reason of his insistence. He answers: "Sire! My father died fighting for you in the battle of Mahoba, but we found not his body afterwards; and so the young men that are my companions jest with me, and would suggest that he was not in the battle at all, and I would prove to them that my race stays in the battle."

Then the Sovereign was stirred with strong emotion, and drew the boy to his side and lifted his right arm, and a hush fell on the assemblage; and then he cried in a voice vibrating between tears and wrath: "Call all those foolish youths to me and let them hear! That man of men fought side by side with me in the battle of Mahoba; and we fell wounded sorely to the ground together. I lost all consciousness. When I awoke, the wave of battle had rolled away elsewhere, and victory was won; but foul carrion-birds, thinking me dead, were flapping all about me, and beginning to peck and pull about my nerveless limbs; and he, lying at a short distance from me, both his legs cut away by a great sword-stroke, unable to crawl up to me and drive those birds away, was cutting piece after piece of flesh from his own body with his broken sword, and flinging them to the vultures to attract them away from

me, his helpless Sovereign ! I fainted again, and knew no more till I recovered sense in my own tents amidst my Chiefs and friends, and saw him not again. Was this the man, O foolish boys ! who would not stay in battle ? Was this the man whose shining fame should be bedimmed with a light breath ? Cherish his memory with reverence, and touch it not again with the dusty hand of flippancy. Samyamārāya was no runner-away. He was the brother-in-arms of Prīthvirāj."

Many a battle followed, and at last Prīthvirāj and Samarsi were triumphant, and Samarsi returned to Chittor. Then came a strange period of sloth for Prīthvirāj, great warrior as he was, and onwards pressed the Afghân foe. Then suddenly awaking, as if from sleep, the Lion of Delhi sprang to meet the foe, when Muhammad had captured Bhatīnda, one of his cities (S. 1247. A. D. 1191), and rolled him back, broken, on Lahore.

Two years had passed ; again Muhammad threatened. "Samarsi, brother, come," wrote Prīthvirāj, and sent his horsemen round, calling on the Rājput Chiefs to rally to his banner. Forth from Chittor came the Regent of Mahādeva, hurrying to his last battlefield, and with him Prīthā, his beloved wife, sister of Delhi's Lord. And many another Chief comes galloping, the fiery-hearted Children of the King, and on

the banks of the river Ghuggur they assemble, and there meet the serried ranks of Muslims.

Ah! who may tell the story of that battle, or sing the deeds of heroism wrought by the men who fought and died. Twice the sun set on that scene of slaughter, and the crimson western rays were thrown back yet more crimsoned from the serried ranks of dead, that lay in long rows like swathes of grass scythe-cut—but here the scythe was in the hands of Death. The sun rose again on the third morning, and saw yet once again the strife commence; at eve of that third day the fight was over; Samarsi and his son Kalyân lay there, with thirteen thousand of the warriors of Mewâr, and thousands more of Delhi's bravest and noblest, "asleep on the banks of the Ghuggur"; there, alas! lay not Prithvirâj, who, charging with desperate courage, time after time, on the very crest of the "wave of steel," was carried by his impetuosity far into the ranks of the enemy, and, seeking death in vain, was dragged from his dying steed by countless hands, ere he could free himself from the fallen war-horse, and held helpless by his triumphant foes. Short shrift was his; sharp taunt from Muhammad's lips, met by proud dauntless answer; high was reared the noble head for the last time; the laughing lips sent out a shaft of jesting scorn. Outflashed a dagger, quickly plunged into the captive's breast;

one moment more he stood, while all men held their breath, and then fell headlong and lay prone in death, as falls a forest tree before the woodman's axe (S. 1249. A. D. 1193).

With him perished the throne of the Pāṇdavas, and the rest of the story took not long in the telling. The fierce hosts of Paṭhāns swept onwards to Delhi, and gallant Prince Rainsi perished on the walls, as they took the city by assault. The Chief of Kanauj, who had done so much to bring about the catastrophe, was defeated at Etāwah, and drowned in Gangā, his State being added to the Muslim empire, S. 1250 (A. D. 1195). Henceforth the Crescent waved where the Lotus-bloom had flowered, and Delhi became the Paṭhān, and then the Mughal, capital, the seat of Muhammadan rule.

The son of Jayachandra of Kanauj, Seoji, fled southwards to Mārwar, and founded there the Raṭhore dynasty, ousting the Puriharas of Mundore. The friendship of Jayachandra for the Paṭhāns reappeared in his race as friendship for the Mughals, and the swords of the Raṭhores were oft placed at the service of the Emperors of Delhi. It is said that no less than 50,000 Raṭhores have gathered round one banner for Delhi in the field. We shall meet with them again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEROIC TRAGEDY OF CHITTOR.

Chittor is one of the cities that seem to have been doomed to continual struggle, and gateway after gateway on her winding ascent is marked with stones that tell how there a hero fought and died. She sits on her mountain-top a Queen, though disrowned now, and gazes over the wide plains that she has often seen glittering with lance-points, quivering under the hoofs of charging squadrons. Chittor was taken possession of by the Pramaras, by a Chief of the Maurya dynasty, sixth in descent from Ashoka (see pp. 8, 9), and then by Bappa, as we have seen. It was temporarily seized by a Prince of Kanauj, before Samarsi ruled, for a tablet was found by Tod, placed there by Komarpâl of Kanauj, bearing date S. 1206 (A. D. 1150), the year in which Samarsi was born. Samarsi regained it, and an account remains of his last going forth from it, when he left Mewâr to fight beside Prithvirâj in his last battle, and to die on the banks of Ghuggur.

After Samarsi came Râwul Kurṇa, his son, who died broken-hearted when his cousin Bharat, son

of Surâjmal, his father's brother, was driven away from Chit̥tor by some plot, and when his son deserted him. Bharat's son, Rahup, ascended the throne, S. 1257 (A. D. 1201), and, as we know, won by the sword the title of Râṇâ, which he transmitted to his descendants. Nine princes followed him in swift succession, of whom no less than six died in battle, striving to wrest the sacred town of Gayâ from the hands of the Paṭhâns. Gayâ seems to have been to the Râjputs what Jerusalem was to the Christians, and the Chiefs of Mewâr, like the Kings of the countries of Europe, were constantly battling to win back their holy city from the all-conquering armies of Islâm.

It is the year S. 1331 (A. D. 1275), and the boy Prince, Lakumsi, ascends the throne of Mewâr, in the royal city of Chit̥tor. His uncle Bhîmsi is Protector. Wife of Bhîmsi is Paḍminî, fairest of the fair; and Alâ-u-dḍîn, the Paṭhân Emperor, is fired by the fame of her beauty, and leads his splendid army into Râjputâna, besieging Chit̥tor, in hope to capture her. Long siege befalls, and at length the Paṭhân Chief prays for a sight of the royal beauty, though but transmitted by mirrors. This Bhîmsi grants, and Alâ-u-dḍîn is admitted within Chit̥tor with slender guard, safe under the honour of the Râjput Chief. He sees, and goes. With him goes also Bhîmsi in his courtesy, and just outside his gates is seized by

ambushed Pathâns, and led away, a prisoner.

"What the ransom for our Chief, O Emperor?"

"Padmini, fairest of the fair."

A Chief's enslavement, or his perpetual dishonour? The wife is told. Aye, she will go, and set free her lord. In her bosom a keen dagger, wholly veiled from head to foot, she enters the royal litter; before her go seven hundred litters, closely draped; some are to remain, some to return to Chittor after fit farewell; but peep within; no dainty maiden sits there, handmaid of a Princess, but stern warrior with shield and sword. And each is on the shoulders of six bearers, armed soldier every one—4200 Rājput fighters, led by 700 of her best.

They reach the imperial camp, and enter the prepared enclosure, cloth-draped.

"Grant, O Emperor, an interview between the husband and the wife."

A grim assent is given.

But there is long delay, and hotly chafes the Pathân Ruler, nor means he that Bhîmsi shall escape him; best pledge for the submission of Chittor. A line of litters is already going forth; why more delay? Fiercely he enters the enclosure, his guard around him.

Ho! wily Pathân Monarch, craft has been met by craft. Out rings the battle-cry of Shoshodiya,

as Chittor's best dash aside the litter-curtains, and the bearers, warriors now, spring up with clash of steel. Bhîmsi has gone and fair Padmini too, and here stand the Râjaputrâs, doomed to die.

"Pursue! pursue!" cries the Emperor, as the facts break on his startled mind, but between pursuit and Bhîmsi are the breasts of the noblest of his warriors. There is clash of sword on buckler, fierce blow and fiercer answer; time, time, is all they fight for, time that Bhîmsi and his loved one may reach the spot where swiftest horses stand impatient to bear their royal riders within the walls of Chittor. For time they pay their blood, and one by one they fall, till none remains to tell the story, save by the silent eloquence of sword-pierced corpse.

On to Chittor at last the army pours, and fierce assault is made. Gorah and Baḍul lead the Râjaputrâs on, Baḍul a lad of twelve. Terrible the struggle beneath the walls, but the hosts of Pathâns at last roll back—the price of Padmini is too high.

The "half-sack" of Chittor, the Annals call it, so many of her bravest were cut off.

Baḍul survives, and seeks his uncle's wife, standing beside the funeral pile. "How died my dear?" the Râjaputrî asked.

"Reaper was he of the harvest of the battle," said the boy. "As gleaner of his sword I followed humbly at his back. A carpet of slain foes he spread for his repose; for pillow for his tired head a barbarian prince he slew; on that carpet he laid himself to rest, and well he sleeps thereon, O Lady."

"Tell me again, my child, what deeds he wrought."

"Sweet mother mine, what story of his deeds can any tell, since no enemy is left alive to praise or fly him?"

"'Tis well; at my delay my lord will marvel." Into the flame she sprang, and joined her lord.

But the struggle was not yet over. The hosts of Alâ-u-ddîn, truly, had been rolled back, but the fiery heart of the Pathân Emperor could not forget the beauty of Padmini, the Lotus-Flower, the beauty so fatal to Chittor.

Fair in very truth was she, that peerless pearl of women, fair as she was chaste. Her starry eyes were dark and deep, with all the liquid tenderness without the sadness of tears; the rose of her pure blood glowed softly through the golden fairness of her skin; her gait had all the lightness of the antelope wedded to the stately grace of the floating swan. Fair enough for imperial throne indeed, but that Lotus-bloom

might not be plucked by alien hands, nor deck an alien breast.

Swiftly uprolled again the Pathân hosts, as thunder clouds roll up from where sky touches earth at the horizon. And like those clouds they covered all the sky, and for six long months invested the royal city of Chittor, shutting it out from all the country round. The doom of Chittor flashed out from those hosts of dusky warriors, as lurid lightning flashes from the darkness of the clouds.

Fierce and prolonged the fighting, day by day, and ever the Rājput warriors grew fewer, while the hosts of their besiegers were ever re-inforced. The Rāṇā lay within his palace weary with arduous struggle, pondering how he might save alive at least one of his twelve sons to carry on his line. One dim lamp shone faintly, scarce lightening the darkness of the hall. Out of the gloom a voice came forth.

“Hungry am I,” it said.

And the Rāṇā saw between the granite pillars the stately form of Bhavāni, the guardian Devi of Chittor.

“Hungry?” the Rāṇā cried, unshrinking. “Eight thousand of my kin have died to feed thee full.”

“Royal must be the heroes who come to feast

with me in my home in Svargalok; away from thy proud line will Mewâr pass, if twelve crowned heads give not for her their lives."

She spoke, and was not.

Before his gathered Chiefs, upon the morrow, the Râṇâ told his tale "Mere dream!" the Chieftains said. "Dream, born of weariness and battle."

"Come, then, when the midnight gong beats out the hour," said the Râṇâ, "and see for yourselves what may befall."

Gathered within the palace hall were Chittôr's Chiefs, the Râṇâ in their midst, his sons around him, ere yet the midnight gong had sounded through the silence of the night. The last blow fell, and the long note quivered out, and slowly died away. See! a red light shines out, blood-red against the granite of the wall, and in that light the Devî stands, and in her hand a keen sword gleams.

"Twelve heads that wear the diadem must fall in death," she said, and her voice rolled, like a muffled drum, from wall to wall. "Twelve seats are empty at my board, and none but Kings may fill them, aye, and Kings that freely give their lives for line and land. Twelve are the sons that stand around thee, King! Let royal state surround them, one by one; three days the

first shall reign, and on the fourth day give his life in fight. And so with each in turn. Thus shall the crown remain with thy proud House. "

Then eagerly sprang forth Ursi, the eldest born. "Mine, mine, the birthright!" rang out the clear young voice. "I am the first to reign and die."

"Nay, not the eldest," cried eleven voices. "Ours, the younger-born, ours the right to die."

And so the generous contest raged. At last the Râṇā spoke, and at his voice the clamour sank, as waves before Varuna.

"The eldest son must reign before his brothers. Youth of the mighty arms, I yield my rule to thee."

Ursi was hailed as Râṇā, and for three days he sat beneath the Chhâtra.* Then gathering his warriors around him, he charged the foe, fought for long hours, and died. Then Ajeyasi claimed the death gaddi, but on him his father's eyes were fixed with deepest tenderness, on him most dearly loved of all. E'en youthful passion must give way when father's voice is raised, and, discontent, Ajeyasi yields his place, and watches longingly his brothers rule and die. Eleven now have sat beneath the scarlet canopy; eleven now have dyed scarlet with their blood the saffron

* The royal umbrella, red in colour.

robe. † Only the Râṇā and his son Ajeysi remain of the proud Mewâr House.

"Child of my heart, to thee I give the State. Take a small band of our bravest and gain Kailwarra, and thence rule Mewâr, and keep her clean and free. Twelfth of the promised lives, I go, to join thy brothers, waiting for my coming. Obey my word and go."

Vainly the youth implored: "Father, my father, reign, and let me die."

"For sake of freedom and of ancient faith, my son, go forth. Reign thou a hundred years, and then seat on the gaddî Hamir, thine eldest brother's son."

And, after long entreating, sad-eyed departed Ajeysi, and under cover of his father's furious charge upon the foe, he slipped away and gained Kailwarra, unpursued. But ere he goes, what haps?

He and his father stand together as the last day dawns: and hark! there is a sound of music, and a long procession meets their grave stern eyes. Is it a marriage band that comes with music, leading home a new-wed bride? Aye! so it is, in truth. But the brides are many and the bridegroom one, for they that are going home are all

† When the Râjâputras, going to a battle-field, vowed to conquer or to perish, they put on a saffron-coloured robe over their other garments.

the Rājaputrīs of Chittor, and they wed the bridegroom Death. For every Rājaputra now is putting on the saffron robe, and only the cold arms of Death can safeguard the Rājaputrīs' honour. Under the earth whereon the Rāṇā stands a vast palace spreads, and in its great hall to-day a mighty pile is lighted. By fire, as their lords by sword, they will pass hence unstained, and on the other side await, glad-eyed, the coming of their warriors at eventide. Last of the long procession comes Padminī, the starry eyes alight with faith and hope; and proudly she sees the thousands of her companions who choose death ere shame shall touch. In her hands, aided by the noblest of her sisters, she bears the sword given by Durgā to Bappa, the heirloom of his race. Not into Muslim hands may fall this magic blade. Into safe hands she wots of she will confide it, ere the fire consumes her body, and some son of Bappa's race shall win it back, when the hour strikes. Muffled sounds the music, as they vanish 'neath the earth, but still the song arises, clear and full. But list! the song grows fainter; fewer and fewer voices swell the strain, until at last but one voice rises, sweet, triumphant, the voice of the Lotus-Flower. And then—only the roar of flames and crash of burning wood, and black smoke rolls slowly outwards. Then the gates are shut.

Hasten ye now to meet them, O warriors of Chittor, lest they should weary if their loved ones tarry. Fling open wide the gates, and sally forth, and find on Paṭhān weapons the open road to Svarga. See, the city is empty : nor man nor woman meets the eye. Beneath the ground, the silent remnants of her daughters; battling with strenuous energy her sons, each saffron-robed. As one by one they fall, the rest fight on, and as the sun sinks, crimson, in the West, the Râṇâ falls, the last of all, and there is silence—silence with the pierced bodies on the plain; silence with the fire-charred fragments 'neath Chittor.

Then Alâ-u-ddîn entered the City of the Dead.



CHAPTER V.

HOW HAMIR CAME TO CHITTOR.

Hamir, the son of Ursi, the eldest-born of the twelve brothers who, save the Râṇâ Ajeysi, died for Mewâr, dwelt in his mother's paternal home till after the sack of Chittor. His mother was nobly born, belonging to a branch of the Chohan * family, but poor, and working in the fields. One day as Ursi hunted the wild boar, the animal rushed into a field of maize and lay hidden amid its tall strong stalks. A maiden, seeing them at fault, offered to find their quarry, and pulling out a twelve foot stalk of maize she sharpened it to keen point, and, climbing the watcher's platform, saw where the stalks of maize were parted, pierced the boar with her maize lance, and dragged it to Ursi's feet.

"Fit bride for a warrior is the maiden," muttered the Prince as she went; then turned to his comrades, who were preparing the wild boar for the morning meal. As they eat, a ball of clay,

* Descendants of a Being, named Chohan, from Chaṭuraṅga, born from the sacred fire, who were the princes of Ajmere (see p. 6) and one of whom was Prithvirâj, the last Hindu Emperor of India (see Chap. III).

hurled strongly, struck the Prince's horse and broke its leg; and, looking up, he saw the maiden on the platform, guarding the maize from the wild animals, and 'twas her ball, speeding amiss, that struck the steed. Soft words of courteous regret she came and spoke, and then returned to watch. "Courteous as she is strong," was the comment of the Prince.

At eventide, Prince Ursi, returning homewards, met once more the stately maiden, on her head a jar of milk, leading with each hand a young buffalo. To overturn the milk, a young Chief, over-frolicsome, rode swiftly up and stretched out mischievous arm to catch the jar; but swifter than his snatch the rapid turn of the maid's wrist, which flung a buffalo against the horse's legs and brought both horse and rider crashing down.

Merrily laughed Prince Ursi and the Chieftains as their comrade thus was foiled; and on the morrow, finding that the maiden's birth was noble, he sent for the girl's father, to ask his daughter's hand in marriage. The father, seating himself, as equal, by the Prince, at first refused, but later, on his wife's urging, consented to yield his house's pride, and Ursi and the mighty maiden wedded, and of these was Hamir born. Then Ursi died for Chittor.

Twelve summers passed, and Hamir played

amid the maize, and learned the use of arms, and mastery of plunging war-horse, and grew bold and strong, fearless as the young lion and keen-eyed as the hawk. Then Râṇâ Ajeysi called him to Kailwarra, seated high on the Ârâvali mountains that belted in Mewâr on the west, for the Râṇâ, when occasion offered, was battling with the hosts of Delhi, and was harassed also by fierce mountain Chiefs, one of whom, Mûnja Balaïtcha, had wounded him by lance-thrust in the head. Two sons had he, Sujunsi and Ajimsi, but these, though fourteen and fifteen years of age, were not yet fitted to play their part in war. Hence Ajeysi, remembering his father's words, bade Hamir come, and the lad came, obedient, and touched his uncle's feet. Strong and imperial then he stood, in the glory of his youth, and craved to know his uncle's will.

The Râṇâ told his tale, and pointed to the wound upon his head. The boy's eyes blazed.

"Mine is the quarrel, dear my lord," he said. "O brother of my father, send me forth. Hither return I not alone. Either I leave my body with the Balaïtcha, or bring you here his head."

A few days pass; then Hamir comes again, and at his saddle-bow swings Mûnja's head. He lays it at the Râṇâ's feet, soft speaking :

"Behold the head of him who dared pierce yours."

"Thine is the gaddi, son of a hero-father," the Rânâ says, and dipping his finger in the blood slow-dripping from the Balaiçha's head, he marks with it the tika of sovereignty on Hamir's brow.

Ajeysi passed, and Rânâ Hamir ruled. Following the custom of his House, which bade each Rânâ mark his crowning with a conquest, he invaded the Balaiçha country on the day of his installing, and captured their chief fortress; and thenceforth he fought and fought, until the foe could nowhere rest, save within the walls of fortified towns. Much as he loved his land he laid her waste, that she might not feed the conqueror, and he bade all loyal subjects in the plains to leave their houses and dwell among the hills, else would they be treated as the enemy.

Meanwhile at Chittor dwelt Rao Maldeo, a Prince of the Chohan race, who was, alas! serving the Paṭhân Emperor; and he sent embassy to Rânâ Hamir, offering him his daughter in marriage.

"A plot, a snare," the counsellors cried. "Reject the offer, gracious Prince; he would draw you within Chittor but to slay."

"Natheless, my feet shall at least tread the rocky steps my ancestors have mounted," said the Rânâ. "For peril, I am Râjapuṭra. One

day we leave our home, streaming with blood ; the next we re-enter it, with crown re-won. I go to my father's home."

Only five hundred horsemen might go with him, and when he reached Chittor no nuptial emblem graced her gates; yet as he entered his ancestral hall, his royal port drew from Maldeo and his suite a lowly greeting. The bride was brought, but no stately ceremony joined husband and wife in one; "the knot of their garments tied, their hands united," they were led to their rooms. And here he learned from his bride's lips that she was a widow, though thus left while she was still too young to remember her bridegroom's face. Full grieved was Hamir at the first, but steadfast noble wife the Râñi proved. For when her infant son was a year old, she made excuse to take him on a visit to Chittor when her father was away; and there she gained over the troops left as garrison, and, when all was ready, sent her warrior word.

Sternly he fought his way and gained the town; in his ancestral hall the oath of allegiance was given; and when Maldeo, on his return, came within sight of the city, he saw the crimson banners of Mewâr, with its golden sun, blazing over the tower of Chittor.

But where was the mighty sword, wrought by Vishvakarma, with which Durgâ, the Mother,

had girt Bappa, Her champion, and which had remained ever since as the priceless heritage of Bappa's race? An aged crone whispered the story of its carrying away by Padminî into Hamir's ears, and to regain the sword he must face the terrors of the under-ground palace, in the hall of which lay the charred remnants of the great sacrifice of Chittor's daughters, with whatever else of peril those dusky passages might hold.

It was midnight, and alone the bold Rânâ penetrated into the gloomy depths. He passed the ashes of the funeral pile, bowing low his lofty head in memory of the heroic dead, and pressed onwards along a passage that lay beyond, down which smoke was rolling. Lurid gleams of fire writhed, like serpents, through the pall of smoke, but Hamir pressed on undaunted. At last he came to a wider space, and saw a fire on which a cauldron boiled. Round it sat a terrible circle, women, with snakes interwoven with their matted tresses, with skeleton fingers pointing warningly at the bold intruder.

"What wouldst thou?" questioned one of the crones, and the snakes uprising hissed an echo to the question.

"I would have the mighty sword that is mine by right of race," was the undaunted answer.

A burst of strident laughter tore the murky

air. One of the shapes arose and flung the cover from the cauldron.

"Behold the feast of death. Eat, and win back the sword."

Hamir drew near, and, gazing at the seething mass, saw tossing up fragments of animals, an infant's arm, foul blood and bones.

"Eat," shrilled the snake-women, and one, plunging in her skinny arm, filled a platter with the horrid food and held it out.

Not thus far had come Hamir to be now turned back. He took and eat. A peal of thunder echoed round the cave, and blinding lightning flashed. When Hamir's eyes again could see, the witch-women had vanished, and in their place the gracious Durgâ smiled.

"'Twas but a mâya, to test thy courage, child. Take now thy sword."

Well did that mighty sword serve now its Lord. Fierce battle raged again, as the Emperor Mahmûd came to regain his lost conquest, for Hamir met him in the field, scattering his troops and taking him prisoner. Ajmere and other broad lands paid his ransom, and Hamir ruled over an ever-growing State.

"I have but taken back my own," he said; "the rock moistened by the blood of my fathers, the gift of the Deity I adore." And so well

taken was it, and well held, that in his reign of four-and-sixty years he built a powerful State, that for two centuries endured unshaken while States rose and fell beyond her borders, and across her guarded limits no conquering foe might pass.



CHAPTER VI.

A. MODERN BHISHMA.

After Hamir came Rânâ Khaitsi, and in S. 1439 (A. D. 1383) Lâkhâ sat on the gadî. Of him Chûndâ was the eldest son. Strong and beautiful and gallant was the princely Chûndâ, the joy of his father, the pride of the realm. From the chief of Mâr-wâr, Rao Rinnal by name, came marriage embassy, laden with rich gifts, praying that the fair Hamsâ Kanwar Bâi of Mâr-wâr might be wedded with the young Prince of Mewâr.

Laughing the father said: "Son of my heart, my Chûndâ, well is it to be young, and to have a fair maid ready to lay her soft hand in thine. And I, alas! am old and past my day of love, and did I pray this sweet girl to mate with me, she would turn away unwillingly and seek thy stronger arms."

In passionate affection, Chûndâ flung himself at his father's feet:

"Loved father mine, what Râjput maid would glance at one like me, when thou, all-glorious, shouldst turn on her thy shining glance? Of what worth my foolish youth, when weighed against thy long and gallant life?"

"Folly indeed, dear child, to weigh youth and age together. Go hence, bring home thy bride to reign in Mewâr."

Forth rode the gallant Prince, but not to seek a bride: "Mother of mine is she," he breathed, "of whom, even in jest, my father spoke as possible mate of his," and the old story of Bhîshma, Master of Dharma, sang in the lad's ears as his swift horse galloped across the sandy plain, and as he came to the tents where abode the envoys of the Râjâ of Mârwar.

"Some error has been made, O noble Thâkurs, in the name of the bridegroom to whom these gifts are sent. My noble and glorious sire, Lord of Mewâr, is he who now awaits his bride, my honored mother, Hamsâ, the fair Mahârânî of Mewâr."

Puzzled, but too courteous to challenge the swift words of Chûndâji, the nobles bowed and stood in silence, waiting.

"Swiftly my father comes," said Chûndâ, and was gone.

Again he bowed before his father's feet: "My Lord, the embassy awaits your Highness' pleasure. They pray acceptance at your hands, as bride, of fairest Hamsâ, Princess of Mârwar."

"What is this nonsense, foolish lad?" the smiling father said. "These nobles seek thee, not me, as husband for the maid, since thou art

unwed and young, heir to a throne, and on that throne shall sit thy son when thou art gone. But I am old and widowed, soon to leave behind me the throne on which I sit; if, by Bhavânî's favor, a son were born to my old age, that son would be your vassal, not Mewâr's Lord."

"Not so, not so," the eager youth protested. "My arm should guard my younger brother's throne, I his first vassal, ready to lead the charge against his foes."

"Enough, my son. This jest must now be ended."

"'Tis time, in truth, my father. For I have spoken to the Râjâ's embassy, and asked for the maiden as thy bride. With three things a Râja-putra may not part—his sword, his horse, his wife—and thou, my father, mayst not give away the maiden whose name has once been linked with thine. 'Twere to throw mud on unsullied snow to join this name of hers, thus hallowed, with a lower man. Nor may my word, given for thine, be broken."

And so, in truth, it happed, and Hamsâ of Mârwâr wed with the Râpâ of Mewâr.

Presently, about the place, played a fair child, Maukal, pride of his parents' and his brother's hearts. And when some five years had run their course, news came from Gayâ of fresh Musalmân aggression, news that the Hindûs could not per-

form their wonted rites in that ancient and sacred fane, and that their holy places were trampled underfoot. Uprose the proud Sun of Hinduism and made ready to go forth, to dart fierce rays of destroying heat on those who barred the way to Hindu shrine from Hindu feet. But ere the Rânâ went, he called his son.

"Behold! thy little brother Maukal is yet a child, and to him I will not to assign territory he cannot keep with the strong hand. Tell me, how much hereafter shall be his?"

The proud blood flushed the gallant Chûndâ's face: "Father, Chittor is Maukal's birthright, and his the Rânâ's gaddi. Never has falsehood stained my lips; no broken promise casts dishonour on my name. Maukalji, come here!"

His voice rang out and echoed round the hall, and the child came racing up and flung his little arms around his brother's knees. On to the royal gaddi the strong arms lifted up the child, and swiftly he marked on his broad forehead the tika of sovereignty, and bowed his own proud head to touch the little feet.

"Now, father mine," he said, "give me land, or give me none—I care not. Give land, and I remain to guard my brother's throne; give not, and I have horse, and spear, and shield; what needs a Râjaputra more?"

"O blessed son," Lākṣhājī cried, his stern eyes wet with tears, "blessed art thou indeed, thou rarest jewel of the Solar race. Let who may henceforth sit on Chittor's throne, from the hands of thee and of thy sons alone shall he receive it, with all the signs of rule. While Sheshoditya rules Mewâr, the territories of Salumbar shall be ruled by thy posterity, and over the Râpâ's name in every proclamation shall be graven thy spear, the sign of power, so that no order shall be valid unguarded by thy sign. Take now this boy, Maukal; and make him worthy to rule in this thy patrimony, by thee renounced."

Then forth the Râpâ fared, and fell in battle, but he and his won for the Hindus the right to worship unmolested in the ancient fane. He was the seventh Mahârâpâ of Mewâr, who died to reconquer this old shrine for Hinduism. S. 1454 (A. D. 1398).

And Chûndâ ruled in Chittor in his brother's name, till evil men stirred up against him the jealousy of foolish Hamsâ, unworthy of the service of that perfect Prince. And she listened to these evil ones, who whispered that Chûndâ thought to slay his brother and to seize the throne. Then Chûndâ, knowing all, sought her presence, and gently pleaded for the trust he had deserved; and when she still sat silent, sullen, resentful, he bowed himself at her feet, as Mother and as

Queen, and, turning, left her there. Calling around him the trustiest of the Councillors of the State, he commended his young brother to their charge, to train and guard, and, mounting his favorite steed, with spear in hand, sharp sword on thigh, and buckler on left arm, he rode forth from Chittor, with a chosen band of warriors.

Now the state of Mālwa was under Musalmān rule, but at this time, owing to the wisdom and firmness of Chāndāji, peace reigned between Mewār and the Muslim State on its southern and eastern borders. And when the Mālwa Chief heard that Chāndā, the warrior Prince, had left Chittor, he sent to him courteous greeting, and offered him the governorship of the district of Hatlar. Many a Rājaputra had taken service under the Muhammaḍan rulers of Delhi for the sake of avenging some insult from his own kinsfolk, and Rājaputra had fought with Rājaputra to the sore injury of their common motherland. But not thus went noble Chāndā to the Chief of Mālwa. Of his own free will had he resigned his throne, and well he loved the child whom he thereon had seated; nay, even against the foolish and jealous Mahārāji Hamsā he bore no anger for driving him from home and State. Willing to stay near his brother Maukal, in case the need for helping him should arise, he accepted the Chief of

Mālwa's invitation, and dwelt peacefully at Haṭṭar for many years, patiently watching over his brother's interests at a distance, and awaiting the time when he might again serve his House.

Meanwhile Maukal grew to manhood, and shewed the promise of a wise and gallant ruler, guarding well his realm, chastising robber bands, and protecting his people. Among his nobles were two brothers, by name Châchâ and Merâ, born of a carpenter's daughter to Râṇâ Kaiṭsi, the grandfather of Chûṇḍâji and of the Râṇâ Maukal; the stain on their descent made them ever over-sensitive and quick to see offence where none was meant; and though the Râṇâ had always treated them well, and had made them commanders of a cavalry troop of 700 men, they were ever ready to burst out at fancied slights. One day the Râṇâ Maukal was a-hunting, and Châchâ and Merâ were with him; the Râṇâ asked, touching a tree against which he rested; "Uncle, what tree is this?" "I know not," answered one of the two brothers, and their hot foolish pride saw in the simple question a studied insult—that they, born of a carpenter's daughter, were bound to know the names of woods in which their grandfather had worked. So rose in them wrath and passionate revenge, and that evening, as Râṇâ Maukal bowed in his pûjâ, they fell on him and hewed him in pieces; and taking horse rode to

Chittor, hoping to surprise the fort and capture it. But the dead Râṇā's warders kept their trust and turned back the murderers from the gate, and the child of Maukaljī, Kumbhā, became Râṇā, though but five years old (S. 1475. A. D. 1419).

His grandmother, the Mahârâṇī Hamsā, instead of calling back Prince Chûṇḍā, surest guard for Sheshodīya's heir, made unwise appeal to her own kinsfolk, and Râo Rinmal of Mârwar came, and his son Joḍhā, and Râo Rinmal became the ruler of the State, and pushed the child Mahârâṇā, Kumbhā, more and more into the background. And Joḍhā became popular in Mewâr, for he hunted down Châchâ and Merâ to the caves and fortress of Ratâkot, near where Udaipur now stands, and slew them both. But as the old servants of the royal house were gradually displaced, and Mârwar men were put in service in their stead, much doubt arose among the nobles of Mewâr. And one day the little Râṇā, tired of play, sat on Râo Rinmal's lap, and the old Chief sat down with him on the kingly gadḍi; and presently the boy jumped off his knee, and the Chief remained on the seat, with the royal umbrella above his head, so that men murmured. And a woman, the Râṇā's nurse, spoke hot words of blame, and flung away to the Mahârâṇī Hamsā, and told her that, if she let things continue as

they were, her grandson would be slain and Mewâr would be subject to Mârwâr. While Rañî Hamsâ remained doubting, one of her maid-servants was forcibly seized by Râo Rinmal, who, one day, vexed at her being delayed by her work, declared that he would make her a Mahârâñî in that very place. Forthwith the servant spread abroad the word, and all men feared the emptying of Mewâr's throne, by the slaying of the child who sat thereon. Then, desperate with fear, the Mahârâñî Hamsâ wrote to her injured stepson: "It was my fault, my folly, that I believed you not, and I am reaping the sad fruit thereof. Now come and save young Kumbhâ's life, and guard Sheshodiya's realm. Forgive, and do your duty."

Now Chundâ knew well what was passing, and was ill-pleased that Rahtore Kings should rule the Mewâr lands. So he wrote back: "Surely will I free Mewâr from Rahtore grip, but when I reach Chittor there will be battle, and the boy Kumbhâ may be treacherously slain. So send the child often to play in neighbouring villages, that his goings out and in raise no suspicion; make feast on Lakshmi's day, the Feast of Lights, and let the Rânâ go to see the festival; then will I come to Chittor, and he shall be outside in safety while the fight is raging."

And so for many weeks 'twas done, and none

noticed the goings and comings of the Râṇā, with his grandmother and her women. And one by one Chûṇḍāji's old retainers came dropping into Chittor, saying they were weary of exile and of the Prince's service, and abode within the city, mostly near the gates. And when the feast of Lakṣmī Devī came, the boy Râṇā went out to see the merry scene at Gosūnda, some seven miles from Chittor, and many of the returned exiles followed him, a goodly band of warriors. Presently night fell, and the Râṇā turned homewards slowly; and listen! there ring behind him the hoofs of galloping horses, and as the leader passes he bends low in greeting but draws not rein, and forty men ride with him and gallop up the approach to Chittor. At the first gate the warder cries: "Who comes?"

"We bring the Râṇā home," the answer sounds.

And so from gate to gate, until the last is reached, and the warder, more alert or more suspicious, cries: "Halt, till the Râṇā comes," and tries to clash the gateway home. In vain, for strong arms clasp him close, and, through the gate flung open, Chûṇḍā rides, and not too far behind come galloping his gathered troop, five or six hundred strong, and Mārwar's men go down before the charge. "Come forth and fight, O Rinmal, for Mārwar." But Râo Rinmal sleeps, opium-

drugged, and while he sleeps, the maidservant binds him with his own turban to the bed; in rushes the foe, and round him gleam the blades that have already bitten deeply into his clansmen's bodies. The old warrior, awaking, leaps to his feet with such a lion's spring that he stands upright with the bed strapped tight along his back—strange shield that guards him well from rear attack. Unarmed he stands, for his weapons have been stolen away by the same hands that bound him, and weaponless he rushes on his foes. His mighty grip is left him, and he seizes the foremost man and dashes him furiously against the wall, and then another and another, while in the narrow space frustrated blows wound but do not kill. And seventeen the tale of slaughtered men that fall; but as he grips the last man who assails, his foeman laughs aloud.

"Why laugh, when Yama has thee in his grip?" the furious warrior roars.

"I laugh, O Chief," the man replies, "because in killing me, thy fame thou also killest. Who will believe that thou hast slain, single-handed, these seventeen warriors, and me, the eighteenth? men will deem thy words an idle boast, and thus no glory wilt thou win."

"Go then, accursed, and tell the tale thyself," and flings him out.

The bleeding warrior, alone with all his dead,

then locks the door, and fainting, shortly joins them.

His son Jodhâ was sleeping in the town, and waking, found all lost and fled to Mandore, chief city of Mârwar, and thence, in fear of Chûndâ, fled onwards and dwelt amid the Arâvali hills for many years, living by chase and foray. And meanwhile Chûndâ ruled both Mewâr and Mârwar in Râpâ Kumbhâ's name, and trained his nephew well in the arts of peace and war, and made of him a noble Chief, worthy of the great house of Sheshodîya.

Seven years went by, and Mahârâni Hamsâ persuaded her grandson to forgive her brother Jodhâ, and to allow him again to rule over Mârwar, yielding him the capital Mandore once again, then held by Chûndâ's sons, Kanṭal and Maghâ. Prince Jodhâ, hearing that Chûndâ had left the city, preferred to take his father's land by the strong hand rather than as gift, and riding forth attacked Mandore and entered it in triumph, slaying Kanṭal; Maghâ, outside the town, returning, found Jodhâ in possession, and turned and fled; pursued, he was struck down in Godhwâr, a district of Mârwar. Hearing the sad news, Prince Chûndâ came to avenge his fallen children, and Jodhâ rode to meet him, with the Râpâ's letter inviting him to Mandore :

“ Mine is this land by birth,” quoth Jodhâ,

"thine is Mewâr. Thy sons are slain by me, but by thee my father died. Let there be peace, and fair partition of the lands."

The father's heart was bleeding sore, yet love of country conquered love of sons and wild desire for revenge. "Let there be peace," he said, bowing his noble head. Then the two Princes marked the line dividing Mewâr and Mârwar, and Jodhâ yielded Godhwâr, where Chûndâ's sons had fallen, so Chûndâ's loss was Mewâr's gain. For a time thereafter there was peace, and then more wars, in which Rânâ Kumbhâ wrought many a mighty deed; but this is Chûndâ's story, and we cannot tell them here, nor yet of Jodhâ building his new capital Jodhpur. For now Prince Chûndâ sheathes his sword, no more to guard his nephew and Mewâr. His work is done, and home he goes to Svarga.

And still on the State papers of Mewâr—now called Udaipur—appears "the sign of the spear,"



which tells of Chûndâ's love and loyalty. And even to this day the Sanluvar family of Brâhmanas boast themselves to be the family priests of the Chûndâ branch of the great House of Sheshodîya, which bears the name of the Chûndâvats.

CHAPTER VII.

WARRIOR AND BUILDER.

Kumbhâ, trained, as we have seen, by his noble uncle, Chûndâ, reigned for no less than fifty years (S. 1475—1525. A. D. 1419—1469), and these were years of glory to Mewâr, both by triumphs in war and triumphs in peace. During the troublous centuries of warfare that had passed, the Musalmân power had grown great in India. The authority of Delhi had weakened, but her victorious generals had founded many practically independent States. In the Dekkan, Râjput Kings had ruled Mahârâshtra, Telingana and Dvâra Samudra; these had been overrun and laid waste by Malik Kafur, a General of Alâ-u-ddin. A period of fierce turbulence followed, until the Prince of Telingana built up a powerful Hindu State, the Kingdom of Vijayanagar, which gradually consolidated into a realm comprising all the country south of the river Kṛishṇa. North of the Kṛishṇa, as far as Berar, rose a Musalmân State, under Sultân Alâ-u-ddin Hasan Gangâ Bahmani. Mâlwa and Gujerât were also under Musalmân rule, and these two States

in league attacked Râṇâ Kumbhâ in S. 1496 (A. D. 1440), and invaded Mewâr. The Râṇâ, in the full pride of his young manhood, met them on his borders, and utterly defeated them, capturing Mahmud, the Prince of Mâlwa, and carrying him captive to Chittor. For six months he held him there, treating him with all honor, and then set him free, unransomed, and loading him with gifts, in generous Râjput fashion; and Mahmud responded by making alliance with Kumbhâ, and Râjput and Muslim fought side by side against the Emperor of Delhi. In S. 1451 (A. D. 1398) Tamerlane, or Timur, had hurled himself on India, slaughtering, firing, laying waste, with his wild hordes of Tartars; he had driven the Pathân ruler from Delhi and had sacked the city, leaving it a deserted ruin. Various changes followed, and the Râjput States practically freed themselves from the yoke of Delhi.

Kumbhâ now betook himself to building, and raised the great Pillar of Victory, which still rears its proud head amid the crumbling ruins of Chittor. No less than thirty-two fortresses he built, one of them on Mount Abu, where he loved to dwell, and thus he strengthened Mewâr against attack; while he built also temples, and moreover wrote songs, forming a tika to *Gītâ-Govinda*, in praise of Shrî Kṛishṇa. But in this he was excelled by his famous wife, Mîrâ Bai,

Princess of the Rahtores of Mārwar, whose name has become a household word in India. Their married life was not a happy one, for the pride and jealousy of the Rājput husband could not tolerate the scandals caused by the fervent exstasies of the devotee wife. *

The long and glorious reign of Kumbhā closed in gloom. His eldest son, a warlike and gallant Prince, Raemul, was banished by him in a fit of anger, the young curiosity of the Prince being deemed an impertinence by his father. A younger son, stung by longing for the crown, against all nature and all duty, bribed a bard to stab to the heart his unsuspecting father, and reigned for five shameful years, buying off with province after province the menace of his foes. His brother Raemul, the true Rāṇā, assailed the parricide, and drove him out of Mewār S. 1530 (A. D. 1474). He fled to Delhi, and there sought to win the King by offering his own daughter to him in marriage. But as he left the Hall of Audience, the wrath of the Mother smote him, and he fell, a blackened corpse, a flash of lightning ending his miserable life. His name does not occur as Rāṇā in the Annals of Mewār. Only as "Haṭiāro," the murderer, is he there recorded, the shame of his glorious line.

The story of Mitrā Bai is told in Part II, under the title of
"The sweet singer of Rājputāna."

The ruler of Delhi, with the sons of Haṭiāro, invaded the diminished realm of Mewâr, hoping to wrest his heritage from the rightful heir. But this injustice was not to be, and the invaders were rolled back so effectually that no further incursion from Delhi menaced Mewâr, until another dynasty sat on the imperial throne.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOUNDER OF SIKHISM.

In the year that Kumbhâ died (S. 1525. A. D. 1469) a child was born in a village on the Ravi above Lahore, in the family of Bedis (a sub-division of Khaṭris), and this child was Guru Nānak. The place where Guru Nānak was born is called Nankana, and is a place of worship.

In his boyhood he was of reserved habits, he ate but little and was always thoughtful; when Nānak began to speak, he used to speak always of God. When he passed his sixth year his father consulted the village Paṇḍit, asked him to accept Nānak as his pupil, and left him with the Paṇḍit.

The Paṇḍit turned to him and wanted to teach him letters, but he was greatly amazed when Nānak looked straight into his eyes and asked: "Can you really teach me something?"

"Of course," replied the Paṇḍit; "I know my business; it is not for you to ask such questions. Come and read."

"But tell me," remonstrated Nānak, "if you

can teach me the way to free myself from bondage."

"What do you mean?" angrily asked the Pandit; "what do you know about bondage and liberation?"

"I can tell you something," said Nānak gently, "though I am a mere boy."

"Explain yourself," said the Pandit, who was rather put out.

"Calm yourself," said Nānak, "and listen to me. I will tell you how to read and write words in their true sense. Burn attachment, rub it well, and turn it into ink;* let your intelligence be the paper, and with pen of love, with the grace of the Guru, write: 'Praised be He, the infinite, the unknowable.' Learn to read and write in this way, so that on the day of judgment truth may mark you."

"Boy!" said the Pandit grandiloquently, "this is all you know, and I presume you heard this from some wandering Faquir; but what do you know about all the necessary ceremonies which a Hindu must perform to win favor of the Gods?"

"Pandit," said young Nānak, warming up; "you know not the spirit of religion, you have

* Indian ink is generally made by burning the coconut and rubbing it well in oil and gum.

lost the key to the Vedas, you have worked up the simple and noble religion of Hindus into a complicated system, and you express it in an elaborate ceremonial, and follow blindly tradition. Know that God cannot be bribed by cakes, fruit and money ; He must be worshipped in truthfulness and sincerity, and no material resemblance must degrade Him."

The Paṇḍit was about to make a harsh reply, when he was called away by a patron of his.

Nānak returned home, and entering his room he shut himself in ; after some time his parents, with great difficulty persuaded him to open the door, for he was in Samādhi.

They offered him refreshments, but he refused to take any, and when entreaties and threats did not make him move from the room, his father was greatly frightened and sent for a Vaid (doctor).

When the Vaid came, he put forth his hand to feel the pulse of Nānak, but Nānak folded his hands and drew himself up and asked : "What do you want to do with me ?"

"I wish to feel your pulse," softly said the Vaid, "as I would like to know what you are suffering from ; I am a Vaid, and I will prescribe some sweet medicine for you, which will drive away this paleness from your face and make you hale and strong."

"Poor Vaid," said Nānak. "He wants to feel my pulse, but he does not know that the pain is in my heart. If you are a true Vaid, diagnose my disease, and then you can prescribe medicine; but how can you cure me, who are not yourself in health?"

"Boy!" said the Vaid, "if you will let me feel your pulse, I will be able to do something for you, and banish all the pain from your body."

"How can you give me ease," said Nānak, "when I am suffering from the pain of separation from the Beloved, and when I see all those whom I love marching blindly towards their doom? I wonder how you can be at ease, Vaid, when the angel of death is looming over your head; and while for the sake of money you are pretending to cure others, the poison is eating up your very heart." ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ

The Vaid was silenced, he could not say a word; he turned to Nānak's father and said: "Your son is not suffering from any bodily disorder; he is some great man sent by Īshvara to help humanity, and in his great love he is feeling for us all; you can leave him alone."

When Nānak entered his ninth year, according to custom his father invited Pandits and relations to initiate him, and invest him with the sacred thread.

When everything was ready and the Purohiṭ (the family priest) was about to invest him with it, Nānak turned round and enquired: "Tell me, Paṇḍit-jī, of what use is this thread? What are the duties of the man who is invested with it? Why is it necessary to put it on?"

"Nobody can perform any sacrificial ceremonies without putting it on," said the Purohiṭ, who was merely a village Paṇḍit, and did not know the secret signification of the sacred thread; "this thread purifies the wearer, and entitles him to attend and perform all ceremonies."

"If a man who has put on this sacred thread," said Nānak, "does not change his ways, and leads an impure life, does this thread purify him and help him in any way in the end? Does not he reap the fruit of his actions?"

"I do not know," replied the Purohiṭ, "but it is ordained in the Shâsṭras, and we must follow our forefathers."

"From the cotton of compassion spin out the thread of love; make the knots of abstinence and truth; let your mind put on this thread; it is not broken, nor soiled, nor burned, nor lost. Praised be they who have put this on," said Nānak.

"You have spoken well," said the Purohiṭ, "but look at all the expense and trouble your

father has been put to, see all these friends and relations; they will be all disappointed if you won't put this on."

"I am truly sorry that I cannot oblige you," said Nānak; "I cannot put it on, and I will advise you also to think more about the essence of things than the form. Only by true conviction one gains respect, and by praising God and by living truthfully man reaches perfection."

At last his mother entreated him, for her sake, not to disappoint her. Then Nānak simply said: "Mother, I obey," took the thread and put it on.

When Nānak had passed his twelfth year, and did not give up his habits of sitting alone and of eating abstemiously, his parents felt very anxious about him. One day his father approached and tried to persuade him to give up his habits.

"My son," he said, "people say you have gone mad, and some say you are an idle slovenly fellow. I can hear the taunts of these people no longer. I wish you would go and look after my fields; you will enjoy your walks and dispel the idea of the people about your idleness; I think it is now time for you to do something; why not take to farming?"

"Father," said Nānak, "I am not idle, I am busy with my work; my field is this body and

with my self-controlled mind I plough it; I water it with modesty, and I have sown it with the seed of the sacred word; I hope to bring home such a harvest as will remain with me for ever; this worldly wealth does not go with anybody, but the store I am trying to accumulate can never be snatched away from me."

"I see you don't like farming," said his father bluntly; "Then why not keep a shop in the village?"

"Father," said Nānak, smiling, "I do keep a shop; my shop is made up of time and space, and is stored with the merchandise of truth and self-control; I am always dealing with my customers, and their custom is very profitable indeed."

"Ah!" said his father; "I am afraid you don't like sitting all day in the shop. Why not then become a dealer in houses; I think I have hit it; you will be able to go to far-off countries, visit great cities and great men; as you are such a good talker, I am sure you will succeed."

"Truth is my house, and the seven Shâstras are my guides," said Nānak; "and with a purse full of good deeds I am sure to reach the country of the Beloved."

"If you cannot do anything," said his father, in despair, "why not take up some situation here under the sūba?"

"I am already a servant," was Nānak's reply ;
"I have given myself wholly to Him ; I am trying to do my duty in His service, and pleasing Him is the only reward I covet."

"If you cannot do anything else," said his father, "will you be a little more cheerful ? I cannot tell you how sad I feel when I always find you brooding over something like this."

"Father," said Nānak ; "I simply said what I thought about these worldly affairs ; as for myself, I am ready to obey you, for it is my duty to obey you."

"You are a dear good boy," said his father, "and I am sure you will become a very good son. Now I will give you Rs. 20 ; go to town to-morrow, and make some good and genuine bargain ; if you will do this business well, I will trust you with large sums in future."

"I will do it," said Nānak, "and I am sure you will be pleased with my bargain."

Accordingly next morning Nānak set out, accompanied by a servant named Bālā. They had gone about twelve miles when they approached a grove of trees, and they saw that some Sādhus were lodging there ; some of them were torturing themselves, sitting with lifted arms ; some were quietly sitting in a meditative mood ; some were reading ; some were sitting with fire

all around them ; some were sitting under water. The Mâhanṭ was sitting on a deer skin, around his loins were wrapped leaves of Bhuj-paṭra, and on his head was a crown of matted locks ; some young disciples were taking lessons from him.

Nânak stood at some distance, and looked at them for some time ; then turning to Bâlâ he said : “ Here are the men from whom we can get some profitable bargain, and as I have the permission of my father to transact some good and genuine business, we ought not to miss this opportunity ; let us feed them with this money. ”

“ Your father is a very strict man,” said Bâlâ ; “ you must think of it before doing anything ; as for me, I am his servant as well as your servant ; here is the money, do what you will with it ; ” and he handed the money over.

Nânak took the money, approached the Mâhanṭ, and saluted him, and the Mâhanṭ told him to sit down.

Then Nânak gently asked : “ Sir, you have no clothes on, and day and night in winter and summer you suffer from the inclemency of the weather ; your beautiful body is covered with dust ; wherefore do you add more ills to life, which is already so full of evil ? ”

“ This is the custom of our order,” replied the saint, “ and only by vanquishing and mortify-

ing this flesh, the dross of sin is purged and purified, and then the soul rises to glorious spheres."

"Do you take no food then ?" asked Nānak.

"We take what comes to us spontaneously," replied the Māhanṭ; "we are tired of the world, and so don't care for its deceptive good."

"Then will you take these Rs. 20," said Nānak, "and get some food ?"

"You are a mere boy," said the Māhanṭ, "and this money belongs to your father, who must have entrusted it to you for some purpose. I cannot honestly take it."

"My father gave this money to me to make some profitable and genuine bargain," said Nānak, "and this appears to me to be the most genuine bargain ; all other bargains are deceptive."

"Indeed," remarked the Māhanṭ smiling, "you are very wise ; we have had no food for seven days, so if you are really in earnest, go and buy food for us."

Nānak went to a village and bought some flour, rice, milk and vegetables with the money, and brought them and offered them to the Māhanṭ. The Māhanṭ took them, dismissing Nānak with blessings.

When Nānak returned home, he told his story

to his father, who lost his temper and gave him a good beating, and it was with great difficulty that his mother and sister succeeded in appeasing the angry parent.

In spite of the constant admonitions of his father, who used his utmost endeavour to turn the attention of his son to worldly matters, Nānak did not give up his meditative habits, as well as those of bestowing what he got from his father on Faqīrs.

This continued until Nānak attained his 20th year, when his father, getting tired of him, sent him away to his sister who used always to intercede for him.

He was very kindly received by his sister and brother-in-law, but he did not consent to avail himself of their hospitality and insisted on doing some work on his own account. His sister, knowing his habits of giving away all he could get, was rather afraid to trust him with any money, but as Nānak told them that unless they provided some sort of work for him he would leave them at once, they consented.

Accordingly his brother-in-law, who was an influential man, got him the place of storekeeper at Nawāb Daulaṭkhān's. The storehouse was full of all sorts of provisions as well as various articles of merchandise and Nānak opened its door,

to the poor and needy. Hungry people came in crowds and went away satisfied: He gave them food, clothes and money with such liberality that the news of his boundless charity reached his father, who got greatly frightened, and at once came to him to remonstrate with him, for he very well knew that the Nawâb was sure to recover with vengeance from his property all that Nânak was so foolishly throwing away. When he reached the storhouse and found it crowded with beggars, he lost his temper and began to upbraid Nânak before all the people assembled. Nânak respectfully bowed and gently persuaded him to enter and sit down, but he continued to abuse Nânak and his ways till Nânak's sister came and interceded for him; and when he was somewhat appeased, Nânak brought his account books and placed them before his father.

"Look up, dear father, and see if I have really lost anything," said Nânak.

His father took up the books and checked every item carefully, and to his great surprise found that about Rs. 1200 were due to Nânak by the Nawâb.

But his father was not quite satisfied and insisted on his marrying, thinking that this step would cause him to renounce his prodigal habits. Accordingly Nânak's marriage was arranged.

When the priest proceeded to perform the ceremony, Nānak was going round the fire, and began in a deep sonorous voice to chant the following:

“In the first round the Lord of truth created the age of truth. The vibrations of music swelled and three Guṇas expanded. The vibrations sweeping along churned the ocean and from it sprang the lotus. The Lord gave her shelter and never deserted the devotee. Thus ends the first round, spread so well by the Lord.” And so forth.

Nānak passed six years in married life, and in that time his wife gave birth to two boys, Shrichand and Lakshmichand.

When Nānak entered the seventh year of his married life, some one went up and reported to the Nawāb that Nānak had squandered away all the stores.

Thereupon Nānak was summoned, his books were taken away from him and the accounts were ordered to be checked. Every item was carefully checked and about Rs. 800 were found due to Nānak by the Nawāb. When the Nawāb found that there was no mistake in the accounts, he desired Nānak to retain charge of the storehouse, but Nānak refused and said it was time for him to begin his own work, and he left the Nawāb's house, and going to a grove of mango-trees which was outside the town, sat there. His

wife and sister tried to persuade him to return home, but as their efforts proved in vain, his father-in-law, a man of choleric temper, went up to the Nawâb and complained against Nânak. The result of the information he gave was that the Nawâb was led to believe that Nânak was obsessed by a devil. Accordingly he deputed a Moulvi to cast out the devil, and Nânak's father-in-law also took with him a Paṇḍit.

They lighted dhâp-sticks, placed them under the nose of Nânak, wrote out charms, chanted mantras, made passes, and, at last, in the usual way, they enquired: "Who are you, and why have you obsessed this man?"

"Some say a devil, some say a geni," said Nânak, "and some say it is only poor Nânak, a man. The love that has kindled for the Lord has taken away selfish desire. The wisdom that leads away from Him is no wisdom at all. Is a mad person known by single-hearted devotion? Is a mad person known by his love of the Lord? Is a person who thinks lightly of his own self, but is concerned for the good of others, called mad?"

When the Moulvi heard this, he went back to the Nawâb and reported that Nânak was not mad but pretended to be a Faqîr. At this the Nawâb sent for Nânak, but as Nânak did not

come with this messenger, he became very angry and sent three men to bring Nânak by force. When they approached Nânak, they told him that the Nawâb was very angry and had ordered them even to use force if necessary. Thereupon Nânak accompanied them, but he did not salute the Nawâb as he entered the lofty apartment.

"Why did you not come with my messenger?" angrily asked the Nawâb.

"I am not now your servant, Nawâb Saheb," was Nânak's reply. "Now I am a servant of God."

"Do you believe in one God or many Gods," enquired the Nawâb.

"Only in one, indivisible, self-existent, incomprehensible and all-pervading adorable God do I believe," replied Nânak.

"Then since you believe in one God, and I too believe in one God, your God must be the same as mine; so then if you are a firm believer, come with me to the mosque and offer prayers with us."

"I am ready," said Nânak.

His father-in-law was struck dumb with amazement, and he at once left the Court, believing that Nânak had embraced Islâm.

It was Friday, and as the time for prayer

was at hand, the Nawâb got up and, accompanied by Nânak, proceeded to the mosque. When the Kâzi began to repeat the prayer, the Nawâb and his party began to go through the usual bowing ceremony, but Nânak stood silently still. When the prayer was over, the Nawâb turned towards Nânak and indignantly asked: "Why did you not go through the usual ceremonies? You are a liar and your pretensions are false. You did not come here to stand like a log."

"You put your face to the earth," observed Nânak, "while your mind was running wild in the skies; you were thinking of getting horses from Kandahâr, not offering prayers; and your priest, sir, while going automatically through the bowing process, was thinking of the safety of the mare which foaled only the other day. How can I offer prayers with those who go through customary bows and repeat words like a parrot."

The Nawâb acknowledged that he was really thinking of getting horses, and all the time he was praying the thought harassed him, but the Kâzi was greatly displeased, and turning towards Nânak showered a volley of questions.

"What is the beginning of saintliness? What is the end of saintliness? What is the key of saintliness? What is the light of saintliness?"

What is the garb of saintliness ? If you are a true Faqîr, answer these questions."

"The beginning of saintliness is the killing of egoism. The end of saintliness is eternal life. The key of saintliness is humility and mortification of self. The light of saintliness is silent meditation. The garb of saintliness is truth and tolerance," replied Nânak.

"Why have you not shaved your head ? Why have you not put on the proper Faqîr clothes ?" asked the Kâzi.

"What is the use of shaving the head ?" said Nânak ; "it is the mind which should be shaved ; the life must be wholly surrendered to the Gurudevâ ; and all attachment and all longing must be abandoned. What is the use of putting on kafni, when desire for life still clings to the man ?"

"Then why from time of yore have certain clothes always been used by Faqîrs ?" asked the the Kâzi ; "were all of them fools to put them on ?" "By no means," answered Nânak, "but only the unripe require them, to remind them of their vows and to protect them from the aggressive Mâyâ. The cap and the shaving of the head signify that the wearer is as innocent as a child, for it is the dress of a child. Kafni is the dress for dead bodies, and shows that the wearer has to

subdue his body. The rubbing of the body with dust shows that the wearer should be as humble as earth, and the setting up of a fire means that the sense-organs are to be burnt up in it, and the fire of devotion kindled."

"But how can all attachment be killed," enquired the Kâzi again.

"The fire of love burns away all attachment," said Nânak, "and gives wings to the self, who soars from the selfish to the selfless world."

The Kâzi was silenced and they left Nânak there. He then went home and rested for the night. Next morning he took leave of his wife and sister and accompanied by Bâlâ and Mar'ânâ, a musician, Nânak took his departure, and his friends and relatives watched the three go northwards with many blessings.

Evening found them at rest under a village tree, in front of the shop of a carpenter named Lâlu, talking to the carpenter as the cattle came in from the grazing-ground, and the women prepared the day's last meal.

The carpenter was a good and affable man, and used to entertain sâdhus. He dragged out a string bedstead for Nânak, and set warm cooked food before them, and there they rested for the night.

Next day the village banker, Rai Bhâg, invited

all the village Brāhmanas to dine at his house, and, hearing that an ascetic was stopping under a tree, he sent for Nānak.

Guru Nānak went, but refused to take his food

“Why don’t you take my food?” asked Rai Bhāg.

“Because,” said Nānak, “your food is not pure, for you have cooked this food for self-glorification; it is a tāmasic gift and therefore impure.”

“You call my food impure while that of the low caste Lālu is pure? How is that?” asked Rai Bhāg contemptuously.

“You treat your guests irreverently and contemptuously,” said Nānak, “that shows your tāmasic aims. I ate food cooked by Lālu, for it was cooked with love and brought with reverence, with no desire for repayment. You must learn a lesson from humble Lālu. Your food is full of blood.”

“What proof have you that my food is impure,” demanded Rai Bhāg angrily.

Nānak took Rai Bhāg’s food in one hand while in the other he took the food cooked by Lālu, and, as he pressed each, from Rai Bhāg’s food oozed out drops of blood, while from that of Lālu oozed out milk.

Rai Bhâg with joined hands prostrated himself before Guru Nânak, and begged forgiveness, and became a Sikh.

The village was still asleep when Guru Nânak, accompanied by Bâlâ and Marḍânâ, left it and took the road to Harḍvar. Their progress outward was slow, for they usually stopped in some roadside village before it became very hot, where they were generally persuaded to spend the night by hospitable peasants, who entertained them with fresh food and warm milk. So most of the time was taken away by these halts, and it was long after two months that they found themselves one morning at the beautiful bathing ghât, where thousands of pilgrims were taking their baths and, facing the sun, were throwing water towards it, while the purohīts were hastily reciting some mantras and haggling over their fees.

Guru Nânak gently slipped into the cool fresh waters of Gangâ, and, turning towards the west, began to throw water in the opposite direction.

"Who are you?" cried a Paṇḍit, turning towards him; "what caste do you belong to? what village do you come from?"

"I have no caste," said Guru Nânak, "and I am coming from a marvellous village where there is naither day nor night."

"What are you doing?" exclaimed the Paṇḍit; "come, let me guide you."

"I am a stranger," said Nānak; "tell me why they are throwing water towards the east."

"How foolish of you not to know that," remarked the Paṇḍit; "they are giving water to their dear departed ones."

"I am right then," quietly observed Nānak; "I have a field in my village, and I am trying to irrigate it."

"How can the water reach it?" said the Paṇḍit.

"In the same way as theirs will reach their dear departed ones," replied Nānak.

"What do you mean?" angrily asked the Paṇḍit.

"I mean," said Nānak, calmly looking up, "that a man reaps what he sows; such is the Law. Even the great King Yudhishthira had to suffer for telling a lie, though he was told to do so by Shri Kṛishṇa Himself. I mean to say, that no amount of water thrown towards the sun can reach and purify those who are now far beyond all earthly help."

Early next morning Guru Nānak left Har-dvar, and a month after, arriving at Benares,

he took his seat on the western bank of Gangā, near the bathing ghāts.

“What are you doing ?” he asked a Brāhmaṇa, who was rolling into balls some boiled milk and rice, and though it was broad daylight had a small lighted lamp beside him.

“I am making these cakes for my ancestors,” said the Brāhmaṇa.

“What is this lamp for ?” enquired Guru Nānak again.

“This lamp is to show them the way in the pitch dark path which leads to heaven,” said the Brāhmaṇa.

“My dear friend,” said Guru Nānak, “when you are asleep and dream about different places, do you require a lamp to guide you ?”

“No,” said the Brāhmaṇa.

“Then rest assured,” said Guru Nānak, “that this lamp of yours is of no use to your ancestors.”

“Then tell me,” said the Brāhmaṇa, “what a man ought to do.”

“This body is the lamp,” said Guru Nānak, “and pain, born of desire, is the oil that it contains. Light it with the Divine name; the flame will burn up the oil, and make you one with the Divine Light.”

After some days Guru Nānak, left Benares, and it was long after the rainy season that they found themselves one evening in the ancient temple of Jagannāth. After some conversation with the Brāhmaṇas, the talk turned on free-will, and Guru Nānak said: "As long as, led away by desire, you seek the pleasant and avoid the good, you get more and more entangled in the snare of causality; for your action is the necessary product of factors which, as causes, precede in time, and consequently, belonging in the moment of action to the past, are no longer in your hand and yet inexorably determine the present; but if you succeed in killing the desire, you burn away the snare in which you are hopelessly struggling; by denying yourself you get the wings of freedom and can soar away to heaven. This body is an anvil, mind is the iron placed over it, and five fires are continually playing around it; the fire is kept up by the sinful actions of the body, which heaps them over the fire; like charcoal it has lost the light; it will become illuminated when the Gurudeva breathes the divine word over it again. Love your neighbour more than you love yourself; put aside the pride of caste and behave like brothers, which you in reality are; for there is no caste beyond this: if anybody strikes you a blow don't turn round and strike him, but go to him and kiss his feet. Thus alone Salvation can be attained."

Soon after Guru Nānak, accompanied by Bālā and Maṛḍānā, left Jagannāth and proceeded towards Rāmeshvara. The winter was well nigh over when they reached Rāmeshvara, and saw before them groups of Brahmacharis and Sādhus scattered all along the beach. Some with veils thrown over their faces and hands were saying their rosaries, while others with Salagrams before them were making offerings of flowers and food, with the ringing of bells and blowing of conches.

Guru Nānak advanced toward a group, but he had not gone far when he was told to stop by a Sādhu.

"Stop! stop!" cried the Sādhu, "don't you come and pollute my food."

"The corn is a God. The water is a God. The fire is a God," said Guru Nānak. "How can they be polluted?"

"I don't know," said the Sādhu, "but if you put your feet in my chauka I shall have to go without food."

"Cannot you see," said Nānak, "that we with our own impurity contaminate these pure ones? What can a line drawn around you avail, when unwisdom, passions, anger, and hate sit with you in your chauka? How dare you offer such food to Salagram, food which has been cooked by you with these evil ones beside you?"

"How can the food be made acceptable?" asked the Sâdhu; "surely you cannot say anything against the offering of flowers."

"Purify yourself," said Nânak; "slay self-praise, error and pride. An offering made with selfless devotion is always acceptable. Let not ignorance guide you, blinded by which you take these shows for reality; as you sow, so you reap. He, the Supreme, knows no wrath, no pardon; His faultless balance metes out true measures. The fruit of actions blindly performed is darkness. You break a leaf, you break a flower; remember in every leaf and flower conscious life breathes."

"How can desire be killed? How can Mâyâ be overcome? How can anger be vanquished? How can pride be killed? How can death be conquered?" asked the Sâdhu.

"By the grace of Gurudevâ, by discriminating truth from untruth, desire can be killed; by devotion to truth, Mâyâ can be vanquished; by losing all idea of self, by surrendering himself to Gurudevâ, anger is conquered; by killing the self you rise to selfless heights," said Guru Nânak.

"No," interposed another Sâdhu, "you cannot attain freedom from birth, unless you become a Sannyâst; come, I will initiate you and put the divine ring in your ear."

"It is not necessary to take the garb of a Sannyâsi to be a Sannyâsi," said Guru Nânak; "a householder, who sits self-restrained and performs all actions as duties for the glory of the divine Lord, attains freedom. Such a householder is purer than the water of Gangâ. Those who by menace, promise and superstition constrain a person to morality are like a doctor who by opium allays the painful symptoms, while leaving the disease untouched."

One day Mardânâ was playing the sitâr and Guru Nânak—sitting on a rock with his feet in the sea, wrapt in contemplation—was gazing into space; the foaming waves came and touched his feet, when suddenly Mardânâ stopped; Guru Nânak looked up. Then Mardânâ, folding his hands, said: "My heart yearns to see the Kaaba, for it is said in our books that those who visit the Kaaba rise to heavenly glories."

"I too wanted to go there," said Guru Nânak, "but it will take such a long time going by the sea; we will go through subtler planes. Now both of you close your eyes, and think of me alone."

As they did so, they found themselves out of their physical bodies near the radiant form of Guru Nânak; in a moment they saw their physical bodies melt away in space, while they found

themselves wrapped in an egg-shaped luminous cloud. They rose upwards and passed through a black, heavy and depressing atmosphere, but the darkness began to recede gradually, till they reached a most beautiful region, where were exquisite colors, etherialised and brightened to an indescribable extent, like rainbow hues in mother of pearl, while peals of ravishing music, sweet beyond all description, entered the heart and filled it with peace. Yet higher and higher they rose, till they reached the seventh heaven, where bright luminous Beings welcomed Nānak. From there they began to descend downwards again, till they passed the dark gloomy atmosphere and found themselves in the court-yard of a spacious mosque. Guru Nānak gazed for some time intently into space, and they saw their bodies rise up from space, ready dressed as they had left them; a cloud passed before their eyes, and they found themselves in their physical bodies again; as it was night, they laid themselves down with other Hajis.

It was some hours before sunrise when Nānak was roughly shaken by Mulana Jivan, who came to sweep the mosque.

“Who are you?” roared Mulana Jivan, “that you sleep with your feet towards the house of God?”

"Turn my feet where the house of God is not," said Guru Nānak.

Mulana Jīvan roughly took hold of Nānak's feet, and turned him round; but he was surprised to find the Kaaba again towards his feet; he angrily turned him round and round, but to whichever direction he turned Nānak's feet, he found the Kaaba before him.

Thereupon Mulana Jīvan prostrated himself before Guru Nānak, and begged forgiveness.

Soon the news spread over the whole city, so that Guru Nānak soon found himself surrounded by all the Maulvis and Kāzis of Mecca, and the chief Kāzi began to question him.

"Who are you?" asked the Kāzi; "are you a Hindū or a Muhammaḍan?"

"If I say that I am a Hindū, I will be giving you a wrong impression; but I am not a Muhammaḍan; five elements compose this body, in which the Unmanifest plays.

"Tell me plainly to what sect you belong," said the Kāzi angrily.

"I am the humble believer in One," said Nānak. "The Hindūs deceive themselves, the Muhammaḍans dogmatise. I pray to God to save me from both. When a Hindū sits down for pajā, he washes his feet, his hands, and his utensils,

while passions, anger and desires run wild in his mind. The Muhammadans loudly proclaim that they alone are true believers and all others infidels."

"Yes," said the Kâzi. "The Hindus believe in many Gods; they believe not in one God; they are infidels no doubt; they will be burnt in the fire of hell."

"You forget the very spirit of religion, Kâzi Saheb," said Nânak; "learn to be humble; our feeble mind can have no idea of His Divine glory. Your heart has long been a stone; pulverise it and make it earth, that it may be covered with flowers; flowers grow not on stone. How can you think of pleasing the most merciful and all-forgiving God, by shedding the blood of His creatures?"

"It is sanctioned in the holy *Qurân*," said the Kâzi; "only the swine is forbidden."

"Ah! you know not the inner meaning of your scriptures," said Guru Nânak. "If a stain of blood on the cloth makes it impure and renders it unfit for use when prayers are to be said, how can the minds of those who drink blood be pure and fit for prayers?"

"You say that even the killing of animals is a sin," said the Kâzi; "but it is said in our Holy

Book, that those who will kill the infidels shall go straight to heaven."

"Ah!" said Nānak; "did not Muhammad say that there is only one God, who is the creator of all this universe and its creatures? Now note that when speaking of scripture, Hazrat Muhammad did not speak of a scripture, but of scriptures; not of a prophet, but of prophets. Any person who does not believe in God's scriptures and prophets is an unbeliever, but those who believe in any one of them with unshaken faith are true believers. You accuse Hindūs of believing in many Gods, but you yourself believe in them, for Hindu Gods are spiritual intelligences, which you call by the name of Fareshtās, while Hindūs call them Devas. You believe in a personal God, while Hindūs go even further, and recognise Him as beyond all thought, eternal, infinite and incognisable. All religions have been hewn from the rock of truth, which is for all times and countries one and the same; therefore whatever the great Teachers have revealed must show an inward harmony, and be essentially concordant, however varied may be the outer hues and forms which it has received from the civilisations and traditions of different ages and countries."

The Kāzi bowed before Guru Nānak, and invited him to stay with him; Guru Nānak spent

some days with the Kâzi, and then started again for India.

At last Guru Nânak returned to his own village. Crowds of disciples gathered around him from all countries and places; he taught them the Divine Wisdom, the Theosophy, in which he sought the reconciliation of all contradictions. He said that the source from which all religions sprang was the Truth, which was before the world began, which is, and shall endure for ever, as the ultimate Idea or Cause of all we know or behold; he addressed equally Maulvi and Pandit, Darvish and Sannyâsi; he told them that the Lord of Lords cannot be expressed by all the worlds together, and it was vain to dispute about Him, for He is not to be found by wrangling, but by seeking. He enjoined upon them devotion of thought and excellence of conduct, as the first of virtues, which led to the narrow path of self-renunciation.

The day came when Guru Nânak told his disciples that it was time for him to return to his Beloved, and he quitted his body. There was dispute between the Hindus and Muhammaḍans over the corpse, for the Hindus wanted to cremate it, while the Muhammaḍans wanted to bury it. Swords were about to be drawn, when at the suggestion of an old man the disputants lifted the sheet under which the body of the divine Guru

was supposed to be. But only a heap of roses lay there. They all knelt down in humility, and divided the sheet equally; half of it the Hindus burnt, and the Muhammaḍans buried the other half.



नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

CHAPTER IX.

FAMILY STRIFE.

Many a gallant fight waged Râjâ Raemul, but alas! family dissension was sapping the Sheshodîya line. Raemul had been exiled by his father; his own sons embittered his reign by their quarrels, until the eldest, Sângâ, was a fugitive Prithvirâj, the second, banished, while Jayamal, the third, was struck down by the exiled Râjâ of Thoda, for a gross insult offered to his daughter, the famous Târâ Bai, whom he was seeking in marriage.

The trouble between the Princes had arisen from the desire of each to be his father's heir. The three, one day, with their cousin Sûrajmal, son of Haṭiârô, visited a priestess, and asked her which of them should rule Mewâr; she pointed to Sângâ, on which a furious quarrel broke out, from which Sângâ fled with six wounds, one of which destroyed one eye, and Prithvirâj and Sûrajmal fell, exhausted with wounds. Thenceforward Sângâ exiled himself from Mewâr, while Prithvirâj was banished by the Râjâ, but quickly raised himself to power in a neighbouring district,

Godwar, which he restored to order. Here he heard of Jayamal's death, and of the oath of Tārā Bai of Thoḍa that she would wed only with the man who should restore Thoḍa to her father, its exiled Lord.¹ Veritable knight errant as he was, Tārā Bai's oath and her renown caught his fancy, and off he rode to Boḍnore, where she and her father dwelt, and offered her his hand, with the pledge to restore her father to his own—pledge swiftly redeemed.

From Thoḍa, Prithvirāj hurled himself on Ajmere, where a Musalmān ruled, and he carried the city by assault, and dwelt there for a brief while, till Rāṇā Raemul, proud of his fiery bravery, called him home, and recognised him as heir to the gaddi.

In peace, however, Prithvirāj could not dwell, and he fixed himself in Kumbhāmer, the mighty fortress built by his grandfather, Kumbhā, and lived here a life like any knight errant of western story, fighting for the helpless, repressing the turbulent unjust.

From this work he was called back to his father's side, for Sūrajmal, son of Haṭiāro, made alliance with the Sultān of Mālwa to attack the Rāṇā's throne.

Joining also with his kinsman Sārungdeo, he

¹ See the story of Tārā Bai in Part II.

now invaded the land, aiming at kingship, and assailed at advantage Râpâ Raemul, who was well-nigh fainting from two-and-twenty wounds when Prîṭhvîrâj dashed, like a whirlwind, on the field. He hurled himself on Sûrajmal, and they fought till night-fall, and when darkness stopped the battle, the opposing armies bivouacked on the well-contested ground.

Then Prîṭhvîrâj seeks his cousin in his tent, and the two fighters greet each other courteously.

“Well, cousin, how are your wounds?”

“Healed, my child, with the joy of sceeing you.”

“I have not yet seen the Râpâjî, my cousin. First I ran to you. I am very hungry; have you anything to eat?”

From one thâli the cousins eat, whose bodies bear the marks of each other's weapons, and Prîṭhvîrâj, taking the farewell pân, spoke softly:

“You and I will end our battle in the morning, cousin mine.”

“’Tis well, my child: come early.”

Next morn they met and fought, till at last the invaders gave way and fled, and Prîṭhvîrâj returned, triumphant, to Chittor. But Sûrajmal had not submitted, and to the declaration of Prîṭhvîrâj that he should not keep “as much land in Mewâr as would cover a needle's point,” he answered that

his cousin might "redeem only as much as would suffice for bed." So still they fought; until at last, hard-pressed, Sûrajmal made a last stand in a stockade; over the fire at night he talked with Sârungdeo what could now be done, when the thunder of horse's hoofs was heard, the crash of breaking boughs.

"My cousin comes, it seems," says Sûrajmal, and as he speaks, the Prince leaps in, his war-steed dashing through the barrier. With a blow, he hurls his cousin into the arms of Sârungdeo, but Sûrajmal calls a truce:

"If I die, it matters not; if you, what of Chittor? Blackened my face, dishonored for ever my name, if here you fall."

The cousins embrace, and Prithvirâj asks: "What were you doing, cousin, when I came?"

"After-dinner nonsense only, dear my child."

"But how so careless with me, as enemy, at hand?"

"What else to do, my dear? No other home had I. A man must sleep."

Next morn, Prithvirâj and Sârungdeo repair to a temple near, and offer there to Kâlî a buffalo; as a goat is to be offered, Prithvirâj turns fiercely on Sarungdeo:

"Better as offering is a traitor's head," he

cries, and challenges Sârunḡdeo to mortal combat. Fierce is the duel and Sârunḡdeo falls, and his head is placed on Kâli's altar, a traitor's head.

Then Sûrajmal gives up the hopeless struggle, gives all his lands to the Brâhmanas and the Bards, and leaves Mewâr for ever, founding for himself a little State, and building the fortress of Deola, whence he ruled a thousand villages. But Pṛiṭhvirâj never sits on Mewâr's gadḡi, for ere his father passes, he has gone before, poisoned by his brother-in-law, an evil man.



CHAPTER X.

HARIDAS.

Haridâs was a Muhammaḍan by birth, and of good parentage. He was a resident of Buran, a place included in the Bongong subdivision of Jessore, and flourished in the beginning of the 16th century. His love for Shri Kṛiṣṇa was infinite; his devotion for Lord Hari knew no bounds. Divine was his passion, and super-human his emotion. His Bhakṭi for Hari surpassed all. In fact he was reckoned as one of the foremost saints of his time. So firm was his conviction of the potency of the name of Hari, that he used to recite in a loud voice, "Hari, Hari!" day and night, believing that this mighty name would of certainty sanctify the man, on whose ears the voice fell. From the trifling grass to the mighty stars, he saw nothing but an expression of Hari, so that he could not keep himself from calling aloud in an exstasy: "Hari, Hari!" And as his love for his Maker was of the highest order, so his love for his fellow beings was of a typical nature. Men and women, tired of the wear and tear of life, flocked to him and found in him a source of joy. His very presence in-

spired them with something which gave to the desolate and dreary heart a wave of emotion and a stream of consolation. And if Divine love be compared to an ocean, his associates fully and truly swam therein. The number of his disciples began to increase, and the name of Hari spread even in the Musalmān community. The Kāzi of the city grew enraged. "A Musalmān reciting the name of a Hindu Deity," thought he, "is a gross sacrilege and a bad example. This cannot be borne by us. Surely he is a Kāfir, and induces others to become Kāfirs."

The Kāzi, overwhelmed by fanatical passion, argued in this way, and determined to put the saint to death; nay, even the sentence of death he deemed insufficient. The crime, he urged, was heinous. So Hariḍās was sentenced to undergo as cruel a death as was ever devised. In the town, there were twenty-two market-places; into each of these he was to be dragged and mercilessly scourged. The Governor of the day, also a Muhammadan, though reluctant at first, at last sanctioned the sentence for many reasons.

To poor Hariḍās now remains no remedy. He is dragged into the first market. The savage Kāzi stands before him. The brutal tormentors shake the scourge over the saint's back. The shuddering multitude pray to Śrī Kṛishṇa. The severe scourge falls again and then again upon his

back, and it becomes stained with blood.

What can protect Haridâs, and who can be his Saviour? Says the Kâzi: "Read the Kalma at once, or take the consequences."

Haridâs. "Where I to pieces hacked, body and soul, give I not up Hari's sacred name."

Bravo, Bravo! the skies resounded. The Kâzi flies away, the multitude scatters hither and thither, the torturers vanish. Haridâs falls into a swoon; then he wakes, and sees, to his great comfort and consolation, a transcendent form of lightning splendor standing before him. The sight fills the saint's heart with celestial joy, and the true bhakta falls at Hari's sacred Feet. Quickly is he raised by the most tender Hands, and he hears a voice:

"My beloved Haridâs, thou art injured for my sake; speak out and say what punishment should fall upon the heads of thy tormentors? To a single hair of my bhaktas a thousand heads are not equal. Speak what thou wilt."

"O kind Lord, mercy, mercy; I ask nothing but mercy from Thy Hands for my fellow creatures."

"O Haridâs, be doubly blessed. Let everlasting bliss be thy fortune, and my bhakti thy enjoyment."

Later, the Kâzi fell at the saint's feet and begged his pardon, and was forgiven, and became one of his chief disciples.



CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND SACK OF CHITTOR.

Sāṅgā, the eldest son of Rāṇā Raemal, designated by the priestess of Charuṇī Devī, at the Tiger's Mount, as destined to wear the tika of sovereignty, had escaped, with the loss of one eye and sorely wounded, from the fierce quarrel that followed on this prophecy, with his brother Prithvirāj and his cousin Sūrajmal. He dwelt awhile in hiding among peasants, but was rejected as goat-herd, owing to his lack of capacity for that line of life, and then took service with the Prāmara Chief of Shrīnagar, near Ajmere, whose daughter he took to wife. When the gaddi was emptied by the death of Rāṇā Raemal, Sāṅgā, as his only remaining son, was called to take his seat thereon (S 1565. A. D. 1509), and he soon proved himself worthy to be called the Sun of the Hindus.

Against the new Rāṇā, the conjoined Musalmān forces of Delhi, Mālwa and Gujerāt came in fierce attack, but in eighteen pitched battles he drove them back, and all the Chiefs and Nobles of Rājputāna gathered round his banner, hailing him as Chief, and following him in war.

Tod thinks that Sângâ might have become a Chakravartî, ruler of all India, had it not been for the inexhaustible hordes of Tartars that poured down through Afghânistân into India, a new army replacing each one that was destroyed.

Now was the Crescent to rise higher than it ever rose before in India, for Bâbar, the grandfather of Akbar, now comes upon the scene, fit warrior rival of the heroic Sângâ.

Bâbar was of Turki race, King of Feirghâna, and a descendant of Tamerlane. From his very childhood he was a warrior, and had conquered Samarcand when but sixteen summers old (A. D. 1494). After many reverses and hairbreadth escapes, he entered India in 1519, and marched on Delhi in 1526. The Sultân, Ibrahim Lođi, marched against him, and the Mughal and Afghân armies met in battle at Pânîpat, near Kurukshetra. The fight was short, the slaughter great: "Not to me, O Allah, but to thee be the victory," cried Bâbar. Ibrahim Lođi lay dead upon the field, the road to Delhi lay open, and Bâbar, in the capital of the Pândavas, the Tuars, and the Pathâns, was proclaimed Emperor of India. Agra opened its gates to him, and though the Afghâns made a stand at Jaunpur, they were soon broken up and dispersed.

Meanwhile Sângâ had not been idle, and had

gathered all the Rājput clans who followed his banner, and with them marched Mahmoud Loḍī, brother of the slain Ibrahim, with 10,000 men. Bābar had entrenched himself at Fetāhpur Sikri, near Agra. He ranged his guns in well-covered ditches, and locked them together with chains; he threw up entanglements, to break the dreaded charge of the Rājput horse, and raised strong defensive palisades. For a month he remained entrenched, the Rājputs hovering round him, and, while delay went on, treason was busy within the Rājput hosts; Chief Sillaidi, the Tuar lord of Rayseen, the leader of the vanguard, he was the traitor who sold his comrades to the Turk.

Bābar, who was a scholar as well as a warrior, has left a record of the state of his camp. "A general consternation and alarm prevailed among great and small. There was not a single person who uttered a manly word, nor an individual who delivered a courageous opinion.....At length, observing the universal discouragement of my troops, and their total want of spirit, I formed my plan. I called an assembly of all my amirs and officers, and addressed them: 'Noblemen and soldiers! Every man that comes into the world is subject to death; when we are passed away and gone, God only survives, unchangeable. Whoever comes to the feast of life must, before it is over, drink from the cup of death. He who arrives at

the inn of mortality must one day inevitably take his departure from that house of sorrow, the world. How much better it is to die with honor than to live with infamy.'” Fired with zeal, seizing *Al Qurân*, the soldiers swore to conquer or to die. Bâbar, who was addicted to wine, gave up his evil habit, and, collecting all the gold and silver cups and vessels used in the drinking-parties, he had them broken up and given to darvishes and to the poor, vowing total abstinence thereafter.

In March, S. 1584 (A. D. 1528), according to the Hindus, in February A. D. 1527, according to the *Memoirs of Bâbar*, the fateful battle was fought. The furious charges of the Râjput horse were checked by the entrenched artillery; they lay in swathes of corpses on the field, but the entrenchments were not carried. Despite all, the Mughals were yielding, when the Tuar chief, leading the vanguard, the treasured place of honor, went over to the foe, and turned the issue of the day. Sângâ, desperately wounded, was carried from the field, whereon lay stretched the flower of Râjput chivalry; the roll of dead is as a list of Râjput Chiefs. A tower of skulls was erected on a neighboring hillock, and Bâbar assumed the title of Ghâzî, Slayer of the Infidel; but not one yard of Mewâr's land was lost, so great had been the check to the Muslim arms.

Sāngā was carried to the hills, and refused to return to Chittor, until victory had again crowned his banners; unhappily he very shortly after died, some said by poison, leaving five living sons behind him—two had died early—of whom the eldest, the third son, Raṭna, succeeded him in S. 1586 (A. D. 1530). He ruled for a brief space, but outlived Bābar by five years, for Bābar died in A. D. 1530. Thus in the same year Humayun, Bābar's son, became Emperor of Delhi, and Raṭna, son of Sāngā, the Rāṇa of Mewār. Raṭna's brother Bikramājit, the fourth son of Rāṇā Sāng, succeeded to the gaḍḍi in S. 1591 (A. D. 1535), and by his violence, and by the insolence with which he treated his proud Chiefs, had alienated the heart of Mewār from himself. Advantage was taken of this by the Sulṭān of Gujerāt, who, aided by some European artillerists, invaded the land, and assailed Chittor. A well-planned mine blew up nearly 70 feet of the ramparts, with the Chief of Bāṇḍi and five hundred of his clan; the Queen-Mother, Javahir Bai, Raṭore Princess, the widow of Sāngā, led a desperate sally, in which she was slain; the posthumous son of Sāngā, Uḍai Sinha, was hurried away; gunpowder was heaped up in caves beneath the rocks, there being no time for the slow wood-fire, and 13,000 women, all that Chittor contained, stood on the rocks and perished in the swift ex-

plosion ; the garrison, saffron-robed, made the last sally, which was followed by the "second sack of Chittor," 32,000 warriors dying in siege and storm.

Humayun of Delhi was hurrying against the Sultân of Gujerât when Chittor fell, and to him the Mahârâni Kurnavaṭi appealed for protection for her infant son, Uḍai Sinha, sending the Rakki, the bracelet, to him, as sign that she adopted him as her brother. According to Rājput custom, a woman in sore need might thus send her bracelet to a gallant warrior, who became her Kakki-band-Bhai, bracelet-bound-brother, and must defend her, though he might never see her face. This chivalrous custom delighted the knightly Humayun, and he at once attacked the Sultân of Gujerât, drove him out of Chittor, and inviting Râṇâ Bikramâjît to Mandu, he greeted her in brotherly fashion, and sent her in honour to Chittor.

Brief was Bikramâjît's srule ; forgetful of the reverence every true Rājput showed to age, he struck in open court the aged Chief who had sheltered Sâṅgâ in his exile. Up sprang the outraged nobles, and Kañjî, the Chûṇḍavaṭ, noblest of all, exclaimed : " Ho, Brother Chiefs, we have had a smell of the blossom, and now have we to eat the fruit."

Grimly spake the Pramara Chief of Ajmere,

crimsoned from the blow : "To-morrow its flavor will be known."

And to-morrow saw Bikramâjît a corpse, the heir a babe, and Banhir, natural son of Pṛithvirâj, seated on the gadḍi of Chittor.



CHAPTER XII.

THE THIRD SACK OF CHITTOR.

It was but natural that the nobles of Mewâr should fear the long minority that must pass ere Uḍai Sinha could reign, Râṇâ of Chittor. Hence their prayer to Banbir to take the gaddi, and lead them in the field. At first he refused, only yielding after much urging of the dangers encircling the State; but love of power grew on him, and he soon gazed darkly at the infant life that made his Râṇâship a usurpation.

The night has fallen, and the inner palace is still; for the infant Râṇâ has supped, and is sleeping the deep calm sleep of early childhood. Suddenly cries are heard without, and the heavy tread of a warrior's feet. It is Banbir, and he comes with Death beside him, to slay the sleeping child whose seat he holds.

Beside the cot a Râjaputri, Pannâ of the Kichi clan, sits smiling, crooning a cradle-song; at her feet her own young son is playing, and from her breast the twain had drawn the milk that nourished them. "Mother," both called her equally, and equal love she poured on both alike.

A. Bâri, a faithful barber, rushes in: "He

comes, Prince Banbir comes, to slay the Râṇâ."

Pannâ springs to her feet, and glances wildly round; how can she hide the child, how save her Prince?

An empty basket lies at hand, in which the little Râṇâ's fruit was brought. Swiftly Pannâ lifts up the sleeping child, and strips him and lays him within the basket, heaps over him the leaves that strew the floor, and, lifting the basket on to the Bâri's head, she drives him out:

"Quick, quick, O Bâdri, swiftly bear the fruit beyond the fort, and wait my coming."

He goes and Pannâ catches up her lovely boy: one passionate clasp she gives the tiny form, then presses on his brow the Râṇâ's cap, clasps round his neck the Râṇâ's necklace, lays him within the cot, and sits her down. Open the door is dashed, and Banbir rushes in, a dagger in his hand.

"Where is the Râṇâ? where?"

The words that doom her child to death, she cannot speak: but pointing to the boy within the cot, she turns away, and hears the soft thud of the steel on flesh, a gasp—then silence.

A sound of wailing rouses her; the women of the household throng the room, weeping the murdered child, their infant Prince. Softly they

bear away the little form, smiling in death, and Pannâ sees her only child laid on the regal pyre.

No time for grief has she : "The Râṇâ waits !" She flies with swift light steps along the rocky path to where, beneath the trees' dark shade, the faithful Bâri stands. Through many a vale, 'cross many a stream, o'er rocky crags, through tangled thickets, the loyal pair speed on, carrying their Prince, until she reaches Komalmer, and seeks the governor, Âsâ Sâh, Jaina by faith, a Depra Vaishya.

"Take him," she said, placing the child upon his lap ; "in him you guard your Râṇâ's life. He is the son of Sângâ. Shield him well."

"But stay ! at least be thou the Râṇâ's nurse."

"Nay ! for my presence here will draw on him suspicion. When he is grown, my word shall bring him rule."

And so it was. For when the boy had grown into a lad, the nurse returned, and many came of Mowâr's Chiefs, who heard her tale, and they met in formal darbâr. Then Âsâ Sâh placed the youth in the embrace of Koṭario Chohan, the "Great Ancient" of the Mowâr Chiefs, and he eats from off the same ṭhâl as the lad, accepting him as of regal blood. This is the recognition of "regal legitimacy in Râjasthân," and, as we shall

see later, the refusal of this to Kunwâr Mân Sinha caused war. Then on the brow of Uḍai Sinha was marked the tîkā of Mewâr, and to him nearly all the Chiefs of Mewâr swore allegiance. Banbir was shortly after driven out of Chittor, but was allowed to carry his wealth away with him, and he settled in the Dekkan.

Alas! that noble Pannâ's heroic sacrifice but saved for Mewâr a Râṇâ that was her bane. In S. 1597 (A. D. 1541-2) Râṇâ Uḍai Sinha was welcomed to the gaddi, and in that same year was born Akbar, the son of Humayun, greater son of a great father, Akbar, who at twelve years of age, led his father's troops to victory over the Pathâns, and opened Delhi's gates for his father's triumphant entry. His father died shortly after, A. D. 1555, and, when Akbar was eighteen, he turned his arms against Rājputâna, and in 1557 advanced against Chittor.

But Uḍai Sinha—strange portent in his heroic House—was a coward. Of martial courage, the common heritage of the Rājaputras, he had none. In vain beside him shone the gold and crimson banner of Mewâr. In vain his Bards chanted the heroic virtues of his line. It was as though a crow had been born in a nest of eagles, and he, the weakling, was pitted against one of the greatest rulers of the ancient or the modern world.

No longer would Bhavânî come to tell the price at which Chittor might be saved ; a coward head might not defile her sanctuary. And yet Akbar's first attempt was foiled, not by the Râṇā, but by his Queen, who led the troops into the Muslim camp. Nine years later, encouraged by the disorders of the State, he returned, and the Râṇā fled, leaving Chittor to be defended by his Chiefs, the worthy sons of Râjputāna.

Well did those Chiefs defend their country's honor, though deserted by their Râṇā, and one by one they fell. Jayamal, Chief of the Raṭtores, shone out for splendid courage, while many a Râjaputrî donned the warrior's mail and fought for Chittor, and Sahidās, the Chûndâvaṭ Chief, led the van. In the Gate of the Sun he fell and died, and the command passed to Paṭṭā of Kailwā, a lad of sixteen summers, the last survivor of his house. To him his mother brought the saffron robe, and bade him don it for his country's sake. Then she herself entered the fateful field, with her Paṭṭā's gracious bride, and there they died, heroic, while Paṭṭā battled on. Hopeless of victory, the northern battlements destroyed, Jayamal and Paṭṭā called for the last sacrifice ; the women gave themselves to death and left eight thousand Râjaputras, saffron-robed, to eat the last pân together, and sally forth to die.

Then Chittor fell for the third and last time.

for Akbar left her but a ruin. Her great battle-drums he carried off, that heralded the comings and goings of her Rājās ; he took the huge candelabra that lighted Bhavānī's shrine, and the massive portals that the best blood of Chittor could not defend against him. Vanished the glory of Chittor, save in history's imperishable pages, and Uḍai Sinha, whose weakness rang her knell, raised in her stead another town to which he gave his name—the city of Uḍai, Uḍai-pur—and died when four years had passed since Chittor perished.



CHAPTER XIII.

IN DESERTS AND JUNGLES.

Among all the hero-Râṇās of Mewâr, is there a single name that shines more brilliantly than that of Praṭâp, son of Uḍai Sinha, in the glory of whose heroism the weakness of his father is forgotten? Uḍai Sinha died S. 1617 (A. D. 1561), and Praṭâp took his place on the gaḍḍi, but not to sit thereon in regal state. Not until Mewâr again was free would her Râṇâ use the symbols of his rank. For golden platters, forest leaves should serve; for beds, a layer of straw; untouch- ed the beard by razor; for place, the jungle and the desert. Thus Râṇâ Praṭâp swore, and thus for twenty-five years he lived. Kumbhâ- mer, as an impregnable fortress, was made the centre of government; all the subjects of Mewâr were bidden leave their homes to dwell in the mountains; the fertile plains were left untilled, and no kine, no goats, were allowed to pasture there; the conqueror should find but a wilder- ness, which offered no support to his armies. Thus was Praṭâp's policy, but he shared the hard- ships he imposed.

From Praṭâp's side, in resistance to the Mu-

ghals, Chief after Chief fell away. The Kuṭchwāha Prince of Amber (now Jayapur), Rājā Behārī Mall, had been the first to lead the way to Delhi, and he had, in A. D. 1560, given his daughter in marriage to Akbar, who thus became the brother-in-law of the next Rājā of Amber, Bhagavān Dās, and the uncle by marriage of Mān Sinha, the son of Bhagavān Dās, who was one of Akbar's most splendid generals. A daughter of Bhagavān Dās, to draw the alliance yet more closely, was married to Prince Salīm (later the Emperor Jehangir). To this same Prince Salīm, Maldeo, Rājā of Mārwar—who submitted in S. 1619 (A. D. 1563), after brave resistance—gave also a daughter, and she became the mother of the Emperor Shāh Jahan, he who, as Prince Khurram, finally defeated Rāṇā Umra, son of Praṭāp, and received as reward for this from his father Jehangir the title of Shāh Jahan, King of the world. Thus Hīndu and Musalmān blood became mixed in the Emperors of Delhi; Rājputs became generals and ministers in the Mughal Empire; and Rāṇā Praṭāp became the leader of a forlorn hope, battling with desperate courage, but without chance of success. Alone, he and the Rājā of Būndī, successor of the Chief who died in the second sack of Chittor, refused all alliance, all truce.

Against this stubborn antagonist Prince Salīm, Akbar's eldest son, led a great army, amply fur-

nished with artillery, and encamped on the plain of Huldighât, S. 1632 (A. D. 1576), the Râjputs clustering on the hills around, where also the faithful Bhîls had gathered to defend their native hills. Mounted on his famous steed, Chyṭuc, Pratâp strove desperately to reach Prince Sâlim, mounted on his elephant, and succeeded in killing the mahout, but the elephant fled, carrying off the Prince. The Chief of Thoda only saved the Râṇâ's life by seizing the golden sun-banner of Mewâr, and, carrying it off, drawing the Mughals after him; he perished, while a band of warriors dragged Pratâp from the field. Then brave Chyṭuc carried his master beyond all pursuit, save that of one who cried aloud:

“Ho! rider of the blue horse,”

and, looking behind, Pratâp saw his brother Sukṭâ, who, brought up away from Mewâr, had been fighting under Prince Sâlim, but had galloped to the rescue of his brother, and slain his pursuers. Chyṭuc fell and died, and Sukṭâ, embracing his brother, gave him his own steed, and then coolly returned to the Musalmân camp. Asked what he had done, he calmly answered that he could not see his brother in danger without helping him. Sâlim, not unnaturally, dismissed him, and Sukṭâ and his men went off to Pratâp, conquering Physâr on his way. In memory of this his descendants, the Sukṭâvats,

took as their battle-cry : " Khorāsāni Multāni kā aggul "—" the barrier of Khorāsān and Multān," since he had barred the pursuit of these two Chiefs.

Pratāp took refuge in Kumbhāmer, but from this he was driven in the following year, by the failure of the water-supply during the siege, and he took to the hills, carrying on a guerrilla warfare, undaunted, unsubdued. Even his foes were constrained to praise him : " Putto (Pratāp) abandoned wealth and land, but never bowed the head ; alone, of all the Princes of Hind, he preserved the honor of his race." Pratāp was a fugitive, chased from hiding-place to hiding-place, his wife menaced, his children starving. At last, he sent a letter to Akbar, asking if any honorable terms would be granted. But Prithvirāj of Bikanir, a Rājput Prince in Akbar's train, sent him a letter praying him to make no terms. " But for Pratāp, all would be placed on the same level by Akbar ; for our chiefs have lost their valor, our women their honor. Akbar is the broker in the market of our race ; all has he purchased but the son of Udai... This broker in the market of men will one day be over-reached ; he cannot live for ever ; then will our race come to Pratāp, for the seed of the Rājput to sow in our desolate lands." It was like a trumpet-call of duty to the noble Rājput

Prince; he resolved to leave Mewâr and found a new kingdom on the Indus. But as he reached the borders of the desert, Bhâmasâ, his chief minister, put at his feet the hoarded treasure of his race, enough to support for twelve years an army of 25,000 men. Prațâp turned back, and again rallied round him his men; he fell like a thunderbolt on the Mughal army, encamped at Deweir, cut it to pieces, assaulted and captured Kumbhâmer, carried fortress after fortress, till Mewâr was recovered, and paused, master again of Mewâr, to await attack (S. 1642 A. D. 1586).

The attack came not. The indomitable Râņâ had won the admiration of Akbar; the Râjput Princes, who had made peace with Delhi, all acclaimed him as the glory of their race; family strife was sapping Akbar's strength. Peace followed, but the heroic heart was broken; he sank, encircled by the noose of death (S. 1653, A. D. 1597); around him, his Chiefs swore to keep Mewâr independent, and he passed, content, leaving Umra, his eldest son, to be Râņâ of Mewâr.

CHAPTER XIV.

RAJA MAN SINHA.

As the isolated peaks tower above the sandy lands of Ambar, so did the Lord of these wild tracts, the worthy scion of the Kutchwâha family, who trace their descent from the Sun itself, tower above his contemporaries even in the brilliant Court of good and mighty Akbar; his grandfather Râjâ Bihârî Mall of Ambar was the first to attach himself to Akbar,¹ at a time when the horizon was yet over-cast with thick dark clouds. It was he, who by his coolness in the face of danger excited Akbar's admiration, and by his ceaseless devotion won his love; he proved that warm-hearted Indians, if lovingly treated, forget their own kith and kin to stand by the side of their friend, true to their word, at once displaying manly contempt of danger, and boundless generosity, which are the characteristics of every true Râjput. This found an echo in Akbar's own unselfish and devoted heart, and the happy result was that Akbar's admiration for the noble Râjâ changed into a warm affection for the whole Hindû race, which swept away the icy barriers

¹ See p. 117.

of custom and creed, superstition and dogma, and from the whirlpool of destruction raised the bounteous tree of right understanding, justice and tolerance. The cruel rule of the Ulmas, who thought it meritorious to spit into the mouth of a Hindû, was overthrown, "the wall of the Kaaba broken, the basis of Qibla gone," as Faizi puts it, and Akbar turned towards the pulpit of light, whence flows the magic stream of divine wisdom, Theosophy—or *Din Hahi*, as it was then called. A rill from that spring of life entered Akbar's heart; manfully he shook off the deadening yoke of priestcraft, and established complete religious tolerance and dispensed even-handed justice. Love effected what all the invaders had never succeeded in accomplishing, and Akbar ruled over a united India. He made India his own, and Indians lived with him one life; Hindû generals fought his battles, and a Hindû prime minister enacted and worked out the laws of the land.

Like so many fateful incidents, the friendship between the Rājputs and Akbar was brought about by an insignificant occurrence. The governor of Narval (*Majanu Khân*) was defeated by *Haji Khân*, a general of *Sher Shâh*, and had taken refuge in a small fort. *Rājâ Bihârî Mall*, hearing that he was reduced to great straits, helped him out and sent him to Akbar with a guard of

his own Rājput horse; the disinterested action of the Rājā excited Akbar's admiration, who sent an Amir with an invitation to the Rājā to come and spend a few days with him.

The Rājā came at a time when Akbar was trying to control a mad elephant, a task requiring superhuman strength and cool-headed skill; soldiers and servants, dignitaries and eunuchs, were running in all directions; once the elephant turned towards the place where the Rājā with his followers was standing, but there they stood calm and composed, erect and motionless, as if made of stone, in their places. Akbar managed to turn the elephant round, and leaping down he himself conducted the Rājā to his own crimson tent, where he entertained him, and bestowed on him robes of honor, and such was Akbar's charm of manner that the Rājā himself expressed a desire to join the Court, which he finally did five years later.

The valiant Akbar inspired the gallant Rājput with such admiration and devotion by his love of justice, by his chivalrous and knightly behavior, that when, only a year after, Akbar asked the hand of a young Rājput princess, whom he had seen drying her hair on the top of her house, and in whose waving and curly ringlets he had left his heart ensnared, even the iron walls of Rājput pride melted away under the warm

fire of love, and the sister of Bhagavân Dâs became the wife of Akbar; he went round the fire like a devout Hindu, and henceforth Rājputs were proud to serve under his banner, which became their own; they went willingly to death for Akbar, and fought for him in Kabul, Aracan and Khorāsān.

The marriage festivities were hardly over, when the news arrived that Prince Hussain Mirza had rebelled and joined Ikhtiar Ulmulk, and that the insurgent chiefs were besieging the fort in which Mirza Amir Koka, the Viceroy, had taken refuge. Akbar rose like a falcon, and in nine days he was at the banks of Tapti, where he stopped to refresh himself, a small band of Rājput horse and a few other trusty Chiefs being all that he had with him. He sent word to Mirza Aziza Koka, whom he expected to force his way through the besieging army, but, as Mirza did not show any signs of life, gallant Akbar impatiently forded the river and appeared before the besieging army. Hussain Mirza could not believe that Akbar himself was with this small band, and came forward to beat them back. Mân Sinha, son of Bhagavân Dâs, in whose veins surged the blood of knightly Rājputs and whose heart expanded as the lotus expands in the sunbeam, solicited the honor of leading the van. "Let us keep together," said Akbar, "we have no army to divide." "How-

ever," said Mân, "I must push on a few steps before your Majesty;" and the gallant Prince fell sword in hand on the enemy; nor did Akbar and Râjâ Bhagavân Dâs linger behind, but urged their panting horses onward. Their swords sparkled like lightning amid Hussain Mirza's army and, as the sun disperses the darkness of night, so did the glittering swords of Akbar's small band disperse the dark clouds of Hussain Mirza's army. Poor Mirza himself turned to flee, but became entangled in a cactus hedge, and was brought bare-headed before Akbar. "Who took you prisoner?" gently asked Akbar. "Your salt, sir," said the Mirza.

Ikhtîar Ulmulk, when he saw the retreating army of Hussain Mirza, was so frightened that he turned to flee, but the fateful hedge took him prisoner, and his head was cut off by one of the soldiers and brought before Akbar; his army vanished like mist, and victorious Akbar returned again to his capital.

Kunwâr Mân Sinha, on his way back from Sholapur, invited himself to the Râjâ of Udaipur, the famous Prathâp. The Râjâ received him with great formality and a feast was prepared on the banks of the lake, but when Mân Sinha sat to dine, the Râjâ did not appear at the table. On Mân Sinha protesting that he would not take anything unless the Râjâ himself appeared, the

Râpâ sent word that he could not sit to dine with a man who had allowed his aunt to be given in marriage to a Turk, and asked Mân to waive ceremony and dine.

Mân Sinha, fired with indignation, rose; he offered a few grains of rice to the Devî of grain, placed a few grains in his turban, and then mounted his horse, and, turning to the Râpâ who had now appeared, said: "It was to protect your honor that we disregarded ours, but if I do not humble your pride, call me not Mân Sinha."

"I shall be always happy to meet you," said gallant Pratap.

"Pray bring your uncle (Akbar) as well," added a Râjput follower of the Râpâ.

When Râjâ Mân was gone, the Râpâ had the ground dug up and lustrated with the waters of Gangâ, while he himself bathed in the lake and changed his clothes, as if the very presence of Mân Sinha were polluting.

All this was reported to Akbar, who thought it unwise of Mân to have risked this disgrace, but, dreading the renewal of the old Râjput prejudice, which he hoped had vanished, he sent a big army under the command of his own son Salîm (Jehangir) with Mân Sinha and Mohabat Khân, as leaders, to teach obedience to the proud Râpâ.

Mân Sinha, in whose heart rankled the affront offered him by the Râpâ, darted on him like a famished lion, but the Râpâ had chosen his position admirably; he had taken his stand at the famous path of Kamel Meer, which was surrounded for miles round with beetling cliffs and yawning chasms, guarded by intricate defiles and situated at the foot of a pass leading over into a still more inaccessible retreat. The Bhîls showered arrows like rain on the advancing army, but the valiant Mân marched steadily on till he reached the place where the Râpâ was waiting, and there he posted the imperial battalion, which soon began to emit fire; by chance a shell dropped where the Râpâ was holding his Council; the soul of the gallant Râjput revolted at the idea of perishing ingloriously by a distant blow; he rejected all the plans which he had formed, and dashed forward and fell on the imperial army with a small band of Râjput horse. Like a flame in a dry forest he cleared his way as he pushed onward, till his brave steed planted its foot on Jehangir's elephant. Akbar would have lost his heir had not the elephant bolted. Though wounded and covered with blood, the Râpâ urged his horse after it; Mulvi Badîoni, the historian who had accompanied the expedition, prompted by a desire to acquire merit by coloring his sword with the blood of "infidels," and who was in the

habit of saying that the repentance of a person who fled from the holy war was never accepted, forgot all his learning and fled headlong to the plains. It was then that Mân Sinha arrived and rallied the imperial forces; the Râqâ darted like a falcon on Mân Sinha and speared the driver of his elephant; Mân Sinha promptly took the driver's place, and urged his elephant onward; gallant Pratâp was now hard pressed, but he disdained to fly and lower his crimson banner, which still proudly fluttered in the air. He would have been taken prisoner had not the Chief of Jhala appeared, and seized the banner; the Râqâ wheeled round and dashed through the serried ranks of the enemy, while the Chief of Jhala sacrificed himself to save his leader; the imperial army was victorious, but not one Râjput survived to stain the yellow mantle by inglorious surrender.

When Mân Sinha returned he was received with great honor, and entered the town through a triumphant line of nobles and elephants, and was greeted by troops of lancers who moved to the sound of the martial drum; Akbar addressed him as son, and appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the imperial army.

In the meantime, some malcontents in Bengal invited Mirza Muhammad Hakim, brother of Akbar and Viceroy of Kâbul, to march and take

Delhi. The foolish Prince eagerly entered into an alliance with the rebellious nobles of Bengal, and immediately set out and appeared near Peshâwar. Pusaf Khân, the Governor of Peshâwar, sat idly in his fort and allowed the Mirza to advance. Vigilant Akbar heard what had happened, and appointed Râjâ Mân Sinha to check the further advance of the Mirza. Mân Sinha marched with such rapidity that the Mirza had hardly time to cross the Indus, when he found the iron wall of Râjput cavalry before him.

Shadman, the foster brother of Mirza, who commanded the van, though surprised at the appearance of the imperial army, resolved to give battle; he fell bravely on the van of Mân Sinha's army and the work of destruction began; but Râjput swords emitted fire, and at last the Afghân army turned to flee. But valiant Shadman disdained to turn back; spear in hand, he urged his panting horse forward all alone; Mân Sinha's heart leaped with admiration, and he promptly commanded his Râjputs to stop, and sent his own nephew Râjâ Surâj Sinha to meet him in single combat. The youthful Prince asked Shadman to strike first; the gallant Afghân raised his sword; it flashed and came down, but the young Râjâ parried the blow with such skill that Shadman's sword dropped on the ground, while that of the Râjâ only stopped at his saddle,

cleaving him in twain, and Shadman fell.

Mirza Muhammad Hakim himself advanced to avenge his foster brother, but such was Akbar's love of peace and clemency, that though he heard the news of the success of his arms with thankfulness, he sent strict orders to Mân Sinha to retire before the advancing Mirza, for, said Akbar: "a child can be replaced, but a brother once lost can never be regained." The result was that the Mirza came up to the walls of Lahore, and attempted to take it, but the attack was repulsed with such success by Mân Sinha that the Mirza did not venture to show his face again, and hearing that Akbar himself was coming to Lahore, he hastily retreated and did not stop till he was on the other side of the Indus. Mân Sinha again marched slowly after him, for he had strict orders to let the Mirza cross the Indus in safety.

Mân Sinha now discovered some letters in Shadman's portfolio, implicating some nobles of the Court, while one was supposed to be from the Shâh of Turan. Mân Sinha sent these letters to Akbar and their contents aroused his anger, and he promptly joined Mân Sinha, and resolved to suppress the rebellion before it broke out in a general conflagration. Notwithstanding all that had happened, he once again offered to the Mirza a rich province and chief command in the army,

if he would show sincere repentance for the past and bind himself by oath for the future, and send his sister to the imperial Court. However, the seed of this magnanimity fell on bad ground, for Muhammad Hakim, to whose standard now Afghâns had begun to flock, thought of his strong position and dreamed of an independent kingdom in Kâbul. Then, as a last resource, Akbar commanded Mân "to teach the Mirza to tread more diligently the path of obedience."

The Mirza, who had gained heart again, for the Afghâns had succeeded in defeating sundry detachments and plundering the imperial treasurers, came forward to give battle to Mân Sinha, seven miles from Kâbul, saying that if he turned away from pulse-eating Hindus, "how could he show his blackened face in Afghânistân again." The two armies met and the battle began to rage with great fury; the imperial forces, who from the very beginning dreaded the cold and hardships of Kâbul, began to move backward. Mân Sinha, who was watching from a commanding position the course of events, noticed it, and fell on the enemy with such fury with his own Râjput horse, that the Afghâns turned and fled from the field in disorder. Victorious Mân entered Kâbul, preceded by martial music.

Mirza Hakim now at last threw himself on Akbar's mercy; the gracious Akbar so far effaced

himself as to dispense with the personal humiliation of his brother. He gave him Kâbul back again, though he left Mân Sinha there, to "exhort Mirza to glorify himself with the inner and outer splendor of fidelity."

Had it not been for Mân Sinha and his Râjput cavalry, Akbar would have lost Kâbul, for many of the commanders were against the Kâbul war, fearing its great hardships. The promptness of Mân Sinha stood in such contrast with the unwilling advance of the imperial forces, that Akbar determined to secure the services of the gallant Râjput for his successor, and accordingly, Prince Salâm married Mân Sinha's sister with much splendor.

In the mean while, Mirza Muhammad Hakim expired under the load of manifold anxieties. Mân Sinha promptly took charge of the Mirza's family, obtained the submission of the formidable Farîd-u-ddîn, who wanted to escape to Turan, and quickly established a network of armed men all over Kâbul, so that even Abdulla, King of Turan, who wanted to take advantage of the confusion in Kâbul, stopped away, while Kâbul remained extremely quiet, and Mân Sinha escorted the Mirza's family to Agra. Akbar, with whom to reward fidelity was a joyous work, bestowed the Government of Kâbul on Mân Sinha, and every one of his adherents, who had with

him drunk the bitter draughts of distress, reaped with him also abundant joy from the munificence of the royal hand.

After a short repose, the brave Rājput Prince returned to Kābul, and with a small band of Rājputs ruled over a country which nature has created a fastness, and where dwelt mighty leaders whom it was no easy task to bring into subjection. He built small forts all over the country, a measure which so far broke the power of the tribes, that they showed no signs of their old turbulent spirit, but contented themselves by complaining to Akbar that the Rājā's followers oppressed them, and that he was slack in doing them justice.

When order was fully established, Akbar recalled the Rājā, and sent him to the eastern provinces to subdue the rebellious Afghāns and Pathāns of Bengal.

To subdue sundry Chiefs was an easy task for a man who had vanquished the Afghāns in their own country, so within a year all Bengal was brought under submission. But gallant Mān burned with a perpetual thirst for action, so he marched on Orissa, where still the descendants of Sher Shāh ruled supreme, and drove away the 10,000 Mughals and 20,000 Pathāns who still held the country. He reduced to obedience the

surrounding Chiefs, and compelled them to sign tributary engagements; even the Rājā of Kuch Behar, who had a standing army of about 6 lakhs of soldiers, 700 elephants, and numerous armed boats, came to his camp to make submission. To commemorate re-united Bengal he laid the foundation of a town at the very place which Sher Shah had reserved for his pleasure grounds, and soon a beautiful town sprang up, with regular well-watered streets, overflowing with merchants, resounding with delightful music, embellished with palaces whose domes held up their heads to the skies.

Mān Sinha returned from Bengal to hover round the bed of his beloved and dying Sovereign. Those who surrounded him once had all passed into darkness. Abulfazi and Faizi, Toḍar Mall and Hakim Humam, and many others of leading names were no more. There lay Akbar in his solitary bed, fast sinking in death.

The mighty Akbar is no more; cold lies the heart of the lofty dreamer which once throbbed with fervor for the welding of nations; his body is lying in a room covered with a white sheet; a Maulvi is counting his beads beside him, while two or three Maulvis read the Qurān in the usual way.

With Akbar's death the old order changed,

and Mân Sinha's career came to a close, though Jehangir sent him along with other nobles to the Dekkan, evidently to keep him away from himself; for Jehangir in his memoirs writes of him, as "one of the old sinners who surrounded my father."

The generalissimo, a man of Jehangir's own set, started without any preparation, and at Bala Ghât the supplies ran short; the country had been famine-stricken, so they could not be replenished. The Chief at last summoned a Council to find ways and means, and expressed a desire to return for adequate supplies. Mân Sinha stood up and spoke against the idea of a return, and asked them to be his guests for the time being. The Chief readily accepted, for he wanted to put to shame the boastful Râjâ: "How can he entertain the whole army?" remarked the Chief; "he only wants to disgrace me."

But Râjâ Mân Sinha was not a man of words; he immediately wrote to his wife, and trains of camels loaded with grain and provisions began to pour in; his wife made such arrangements, that when the camp was quitted, they found a new camp set up for them at the next stage, with separate prayer-tents for Hindus and Muhammaḍans, fitted up with all the luxuries they were used to enjoy in the capital. It was not for a

day or two that this was done, but it went on for four months, until Mân Sinha's death. In A. D. 1645, he slept a sleep from which he awoke no more, leaving no foe to dread or admire him.

Brave, cool, skilful in war, wise and discreet in council, pious and decorous on all occasions, beloved by his Sovereign, and revered by the rest of the army, his name is written in gold and will shine for evermore.



CHAPTER XV.

AKBAR.

Bābar, the grandfather of Akbar, was the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, and was a man fitted, by his high qualities, to be the originator of that famous empire. Descended from Timur, or Tamerlane, he began to reign as King of Feirghāna when a boy of twelve, on the death of his father by an accident in A. D. 1494.¹ For years he was engaged in wars, carried on with various results with enemies on every side, and by A. D. 1504 he had established himself as Sultān of Kābul and Ghazni, and had lost his paternal kingdom. He first entered India in A. D. 1505, and marched as far as Mōltān, but only to return to Afghānistān, to secure his rear. For some fourteen years he fought, till he was master of the north, ere, tempted by the dissensions among the Afghān rulers in India, and the breaking up of their empire into independent and warring States, he resolved on a serious invasion. In 1519 and 1520 he made raids on Peshāwar and Sialkot, and about three years later

¹ On p. 104 Bābar's age is wrongly given as 16, in 1494; he was born in 1482, and was therefore only 12 years old in 1494.

seized Lahore; but it was not until the end of 1525 that he entered in force, and in the spring of 1526 he fought the battle of Pānīpat, in which he routed Ibrahīm Lodi, Sultān of Delhi, became master of Delhi and Āgra, and took the title of Emperor of Hindustān. In 1527 was fought the famous battle of Faṭehpur Sikrī, the story of which has been already told, against Rāṇā Sāngā and the flower of Rājput chivalry. In the following years he conquered Oudh, Jaunpur and Behar, and after completely defeating Nasrat Shāh, King of Bengal, he returned to Āgra. Here he was joined by his son Humāyūn in 1530, who shortly after his arrival fell desperately ill. Bābar, in a passion of paternal love, prayed Allah to accept his life as sacrifice for that of his adored son, walking thrice round the dying man in Muslim fashion; the son recovered, the father wasted away, and Bābar died that same year, only 48 years old, but having crowded into his life activity enough to make half a dozen more ordinary lives of men. It must always be remembered, to his glory, that he was humane and compassionate beyond his age, and, though eminently a conqueror, he sought to benefit the countries he annexed.

Humāyūn succeeded, but in eleven years found himself a fugitive in Sindh. He married in 1541, and in the following year was fleeing for

his life to Mârwar; across the terrible desert struggled the little party, Hâmidâ, the young wife, nearing the birth of her first-born; at Amarkot they found shelter, and there, under the protection of its Râjâ, on Oct. 15th, 1542, the child Akbar saw the light. Nine months later, the party was again in flight from Sindh to Persia, and the babe fell into his uncle's hands, who was in pursuit. The uncle, Askarî Mirza, took him to Kandâhar, and the boy was only regained by his father two years later. The child lived through the stormy years in constant peril of his life, learning to fight while other boys would have been at school, and in 1555 he entered India with his father, who, with his great general Bairâm, conquered Sikandar Shâh and recovered Delhi. Thence he sent Akbar, a lad of thirteen, in company with Bairâm, to subdue the Panjâb, and there Akbar learned of his father's death by an accident, on Jan. 24th, 1556. Akbar was proclaimed Emperor, to find himself menaced by Hemu, the general of the troops of the successor of the Afghân ruler who had driven Humâyûn from his throne in 1540, and who had now captured Âgra and Delhi, and hoped to annihilate Akbar. Once more Afghân and Mughal met on the field of Pânîpat, and once more the Mughal triumphed (Nov. 5th, 1556). Akbar was master of Delhi, and lord of northern India.

To the south, east and west he was faced by independent States; Mālwa, Bengal, Behar, and Gujerāt were ruled by Afghāns; in Rājputāna the Chief of Amber (the modern State of Jayapur), Rājā Behārī Mall, had sworn allegiance to Bābar, and had maintained his friendship with the Mughals, and his son, Bhagavān Dās, was one of Akbar's most trusted friends; but Mārwar, Mewar, and many another Rājput State, defied him. How should he win these proud Princes to his side, and transform them from assailants into the bulwarks of his imperial throne? That was the problem Akbar faced and solved. And he solved it by generosity, good government, and liberality, more than by force of arms; for he knew how to conquer, and to turn the conquered into friend, and he dreamed of a United India, in which Hindu and Musalmān should live as brothers side by side.

A little more than three years he waited under Bhairām's tutelage, and then, early in 1560, he took the reins of State, bade Bhairām make his long-projected pilgrimage to Mecca, and ruled alone. For many years he warred undauntedly, and province after province hailed him lord; he healed by courtesy and trust and feudatory power, and by marriage into his own family, the wounds the sword had made; moreover he curbed his soldiery, and permitted no plundering of the

tillers of the soil, but guarded the cultivated lands through which he passed, and paid with gold for the inevitable injuries inflicted. Thus the people grew to look on him as protector, and hailed his widening rule. By 1588, he was recognised as lord-paramount by practically the whole of Âryâvarṭa, save by the dauntless Râṇâ of Mewâr, who alone refused all alliance with the Mughal. He strengthened himself, as we have seen,¹ by taking, as his third wife, the daughter of Râjâ Behârî Mall of Amber, and he bound Mârwâr to his side by marrying, as his fifth wife, Princess Jodha Bai, daughter of Râjâ Uḍai Sinha of Mârwâr; she became the mother of Prince Salīm, who succeeded him as the Emperor Jehangir. Two of his Empresses were thus Râjput Princesses, and Hindu and Musalmân blood mingled in the veins of Jehangir. Jehangir, again, was married to two Râjput Princesses, and thus further strengthened the Hindu element in the rulers of Delhi. Râjâ Mân Sinha, son of Râjâ Bhagavân Dâs of Amber, and Râjâ Todar Mall, were Akbar's most trusted generals, and Bengal, Orissa, Sindh and Kashmir had accepted his protectorate. He made no difference between men of one faith and another, but gave place and power by merit only, and not by race or creed.

Of five sons but one was left to Akbar, as his

¹ See p. 117.

heir. The eldest two had died as babes; Murād and Dānyāl died drunkards' deaths—the vice of Bābar had not left his descendants. Only Salīm remained, he too a slave to drink, though capable of rousing himself and, for a time, throwing off the deadly vice. Akbar's last years were clouded by these family troubles, and the death of Prince Dānyāl gave the last blow to a weakened constitution. He summoned Salīm to his side, and bade his nobles gird him with the imperial scimitar, and bind round his head the imperial turban; then, bidding all farewell, he died. It was on his birthday, Oct. 15th, 1605, just three and sixty years since he was born at Amarkot, that Akbar died.

Akbar's claim to rank among India's greatest does not rest on his successful wars, nor on the splendor of his stately court, nor even on his encouragement of art and literature. It rests on the fact that he saw the ideal of a United India, and strove to turn the ideal into fact. Belonging to a creed that had fallen into the evil habit of persecution, he met men of every faith in reasonable discussion, encouraged the freest expression of opinion, treated his subjects of all creeds with impartial justice. Among his dearest friends was Shaikh Abulfazl, the younger brother of Shaikh Faizi, the court poet and physician; what kind of man was this Shaikh Abulfazl,

may be judged by his own words: "My mind had no rest, and my heart felt itself drawn to the sages of Mongolia or to the hermits on Lebanon; I longed for interviews with the lâmas of Tibet, or with the pãdris of Portugal, and I would gladly sit with the priests of the Parsis and the learned of the *Zendâvestâ*" (quoted from *Akbar*, by Colonel Malleon. p. 153). Akbar encouraged the wide-minded Shaikh to discuss with the learned but narrow-minded Musalmân doctors of his court, and every week discussions took place in the *Ihâdat-Khâna*, a kind of academy erected by Akbar at Fatehpur-Sikri. At last, Abulfazl persuaded all the controversialists to sign a document which recognised Akbar as a supreme authority in all matters concerning the faith, and thus set him free to follow his own generous sympathies. He had already laid down the principle that men of all faiths were to be treated alike by the law; he had opened all posts of authority to men of ability, without restriction of creed; he had abolished the slavery of captives, the capitation tax on non-Musalmâns, and the tax on Hindu pilgrims. He forbade the forcing of a widow to burn herself on her husband's funeral pyre, sanctioned widow re-marriage, forbade child-marriage, and the killing of animals in sacrifice. He interdicted the killing of cows, and, less wisely, allowed swine to be eaten, and

permitted the moderate use of wine.

Had Akbar been succeeded by men like unto himself, the empire he founded might have made a United India, free, prosperous and strong. But Salim, his successor, the Emperor Jehangir, was a man of another stamp; before his father's death, he had caused the assassination of his dearest friend, Shaikh Abulfazl; he was intemperate and cruel; yet, so firmly laid were Akbar's lines of rule, that though they were not strengthened, they were not seriously weakened, under Jehangir. Prince Khurram succeeded his father in 1627, as the Emperor Shâh Jahan, and continued the wise policy of Akbar, but when he was seized and imprisoned by his rebellious son Aurungzeb, in 1658, all was changed. Aurungzeb destroyed all that had been done towards the building of a United India.

Imprisoner of his father, whose throne he usurped; murderer of two of his brothers and indirectly of the third; murderer of two of his nephews; treacherous or brutal as best served his purpose, Aurungzeb was a typical bigot and persecutor. He destroyed the temples of the most sacred Hindû cities, and shut up Hindû schools. He dismissed Hindû officers, re-imposed the capitation tax on non-Muhammadans, trampled down with elephants petitioning crowds, and having driven Rājputāna into revolt, issued orders to

ravage the land with fire and sword, to pollute the temples, to destroy the towns and villages. At last revolts broke out on every side, his sons rebelled, debts accumulated, disorders of every kind arose, and in 1706 he died, alone and miserable, amid the ruins of the Empire he had shattered. With his accession, the hope of a United India vanished, and at his death the work of Akbar was destroyed.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE FALL OF MEWAR.

High ran the rivalry between clan and clan among the chivalrous Rājaputras, for honor and for fame. Chief place of peril in desperate struggles; the right to lead the vanguard of the army; the right to serve the Prince in hall—these were the things that stirred the Rājput blood, and fired the Rājput brain.

Two clans in Mewār were rivals above all other—the Chūndāvaṭ, descended from the Prince Chūndā who had resigned his claim to the gaddi,¹ the Suktāvaṭ, descended from Suktā, the brother of Praṭāp.²

When Praṭāp had passed, leaving the gaddi to his son Umra (S. 1653. A. D. 1597), pence settled down for a while on Mewār. Akbar was dying broken-hearted, and had no mind to quarrel with the indomitable State, and Rāṇā Umra busied himself with restoring order to his desolated kingdom, distributing the lands to the nobles who had survived, and building himself a marble palace on the banks of the lake at Uḍaipur. In S.

See chap. VI. "A modern Bhīṣma."

² See p. 118.

1661 (A. D. 1605) Akbar died, leaving the Empire of Delhi to Salīm, who reigned under the name of Jehangir, son of his favourite Queen, the Princess Jodha Bai, of Mārwar, and the husband of two Rajput Princesses; thus trebly was the new Emperor linked to Rājputana. Yet he could not tolerate the independence of Mewar, and in S. 1665 (A. D. 1609) he gathered together an army for its invasion, which was defeated at Deevair by Umra. In the following year a second invasion was hurled back in the pass of Ranpur, and then Jehangir tried craft instead of force, installing in violated Chittor, lying in ruins, the renegade Sugra, brother of Pratāp. For seven years Sugra remained, and then surrendered it to its rightful lord, the Rāṇā. During the months that followed, one fortress after another fell into Umra's hands, and here may be told the story of Ontalla, a city with but one gate of entrance, high walls and massive towers.

Seventeen sons had Suktā, Pratāp's gallant brother, and sixteen of these, the Suktāvats, were seeking fortune and fame in Umra's service. Thoughtlessly had Umra promised that Ballo, the Suktāvāt, should be leader of the vanguard of his army, the herole. The herole belonged of right to the head of the Chāndāvats, who was sleeping in his tent. Roused by his Bard's repeated utterance of the war-cry of his house:

"The portal of the ten thousand," he demanded the reason for the disturbance, and was answered that his war-cry, like the herole, would soon be the property of the Suktâvaṭs. Swift sprang he to his feet, and rushed into the Râṇâ's tent: "Mine is the herole by hereditary right!" he cried.

"Nay, it is mine," dark frowned Ballo the Suktâvat, "for the right to the herole is with the race that rules. Thine ancestor resigned his claim to sit on Mewâr's gaḍḍi; mine as Râṇâ founded the royal city of Udaipur. Mine, then, the right to the herole; resign it, as thine ancestor resigned the gaḍḍi."

Louder and louder grew the tumult, and hands gripped hard on swords half drawn from scabbards. The Râṇâ smiled upon the angry Chiefs.

"The herole is to those who first enter within Onṭalla's walls," he said—and all was still.

Forth, ere the day had dawned, the gallant warriors sped, each clan dashing forward with its leader, each equally resolved to win the longed-for prize. First at the single gate the Suktâvaṭs arrived, for the Chûṇḍâvaṭs had been delayed by a swamp across their way, and while the Suktâvaṭs assailed the gate, their rivals strove to scale the massive walls, where no gate was.

See! the Chûndâvat Chief has climbed the ladder, and stands a moment upright on the coping of the wall: a moment—then, on the chest a well-aimed ball strikes full, and he rolls down the wall he scaled, falling, a corpse, amidst his men. His next of kin, so reckless of danger that they named him the Bindâ Thâkur, the mad Chief, of Deogarh, springs forward as he falls, and rolling the body in his shawl, he flings it on his back and mounts the wall; with his sharp lance he drives the foemen back, and tossing his leader into the street below, within the wall, he shouts: “The herole to the Chûndâvats; we are first in!” A roar of triumph echoes him; the wall is won.

Meanwhile the Suktâvat Chief is being foiled, for the gate is fenced with sharp iron, and the elephant he rides will not push his broad forehead against the keen-pointed spikes, and thus force in the gate. Fast fall his men, death-stricken, and still the gate stands firm.

Across the tumult rings a shout; it is the shout of the Chûndâvat; what bodes it now? Shall the proud Chûndâvat wring from his own loved clan the right to lead the van in Mewâr's struggles? Forbid it! Râjput pride and Râjput honor! What now is one man's life?

From the back of his war-elephant he flings

himself, and with a spring clutches the spikes of death. Across their keen points he lays his body, fierce pressing home the iron :

“ Charge, charge ! ” he cries ; “ charge straight against the gate : my body guards the elephant from terror of the spikes : charge, mahout, or I kill thee ! ”

The mahout hears and shudders, but the sharp lance-point threatens ; he shuts his eyes and drives the elephant forward, deep plunging in his goad ; a mad rush, a sickening crush—the gate is down ! and over the bleeding mass that was a Rājaputra, the Suktavats charge into the town. But the hero-death is just too late. For the shout that fired him to such deed of desperate sacrifice was that which told the entry of his rival into Ontalla.

Thus high was held among the Rājputs the honor of the vanguard's peril.

No less than seventeen pitched battles did Rāṇā Umra fight, but though he won, he won at fearsome cost. Each victory left him weaker ; his foe drew men from an inexhaustible stock. Another army marched against Mewâr ; a mere handful of warriors remained to face it—the rest were dead (S. 1669. A. D. 1613). The Mughals were led by Prince Khurram—given the name of Shāh Jahan by Jehangir for this victory—and

in three years all was over; Jehangir has left it on record that "the perpetual over-running of the country, without regard to the heats or the rains, by my armies, the capture and imprisonment of the wives and children of many of the men of rank of the country," reduced the Râñâ to despair. He sued for peace, and in recognition of his courage and his country's long resistance, and on the urging of Prince Khurram, terms the most generous were granted by Jehangir; but no courtesy could hide the bitter fact that the independence of Mewâr had fallen. Umra refused to sit upon a vassal throne; he assembled the remnant of his Chiefs, made the tika of sovereignty on his son Kurrun's forehead (S. 1677. A. D. 1621) and, shutting himself up in a neighboring palace, lived there, without once leaving it, till death set him free.

CHAPTER XVII.

AJIT AND DURGADAS.

Kurrun, or Karṇa, reigned in peace, and turned his energies largely to building, like his ancestor Rānā Kumbhā, and strove to repair some of the disasters inflicted by war upon his realm. When Jehangir quarrelled with his son Khurram, the latter took refuge with Karṇa in Udaipur, and the Rānā repaid by his protection the debt owed to the generosity of Khurram as conqueror. Karṇa died in S. 1684 (A. D. 1628) and was succeeded by his son Jagat Sinha, who ruled in peace for six-and-twenty years. It is significant of the friendship rooted on both sides in generous respect, that when Jehangir died (A. D. 1627), the news reached Prince Khurram at Surāt from the Rānā, who sent him a guard of honor, and he was first saluted as the Emperor Shāh Jahan within the walls of Udaipur.

Alas! this friendship, so promising for India, was destroyed by Aurungzeb, the unworthy son of Shāh Jahan. As we have seen, he seized his father's person (S. 1714 A. D. 1658), imprisoned him, and mounted the throne: two of his brothers and two nephews he murdered, and drove his third

brother to his death. He ruthlessly persecuted the Hindus, destroyed temples and schools, and imposed a poll-tax on all non-Musalmāns, and at last drove Rājputāna into revolt.¹

It will be remembered that Jodha, driven out of Mewār by Chāndājī, had taken back his State of Mārwar, and had built a city, named after himself, Jodhpur, which replaced Mandore, the older capital.² Through many reigns Mārwar had prospered, and, in Aurungzeb's reign, Jeswant Sinha of Mārwar played fast and loose with the Muslim alliance, too crafty to be trusted, too strong to be crushed. He died finally, fighting for Delhi, in Kābul, and there his Rānī, a Princess of Mewār, bore a man-child, Ajit. Durgādas, noblest of Rahtores, was chosen by the Rānī to take the baby heir and herself to Mārwar, through a country bristling with foes, and to save him from falling into the hands of Aurungzeb. At last, after innumerable perils, they reached Delhi, and encamped outside the walls, refused permission to enter. Durgādas dressed up the Rānī as a servant, packed the baby in a basket of sweets, and sent them off with other servants with a petty escort, while a slave, clad in royal garments, played the Rānī, and a veiled babe the infant Rājā, guarded by the flower

¹ See p. 144.

² See pp. 56, 57.

of the Rahtore warriors. Aurungzeb, after many attempts to bribe the Chiefs into surrendering their charges, at last gave the order for attack; furiously the Rahtores fought, till but a few were left, and then, headed by Durgādās, they cut their way into the open country, and galloped gaily in the tracks of their Rāñī and baby Ajīt. To Mount Abu they took the child, and he was sheltered in a monastery for many a year, while Durgādās and his men fought his battles. Then the Rāñī bade Durgādās take the child to Mewār for protection, and there brought him up right nobly. But the strong natural energies of the growing Prince required strong check now and again, when tending to go wrong, and Durgādās applied the check fearlessly to his pupil. At last the time came when Ajīt was grown to manhood, and when Aurungzeb died, S. 1762 (A. D. 1706), he took horse with Durgādās and rode to Jodhpur. There he was established on the gaddi, and began to reign. The new King ruled justly, for the good of his people rather than his own. But he did an act which his people did not understand at the time. He called up the tutor of his childhood and youth before him and said:

“You were often harsh and strict with me, forgetting that I was the King. I will now punish you for your misdeed. I sentence you to forfeit all your lands and grants, and to go forth with a

potsherd in your hands, and beg from door to door."

"Yes," the warrior-tutor said, and went from door to door with the potsherd in his hands.

One day the King, riding back palace-wards with a gorgeous retinue, beheld him standing with his potsherd at the door of one of the wealthy mansions that surrounded the King's palace. The King rode up to his tutor, and asked him:

"How dost thou feel now with that potsherd in thy hands?"

The tutor said: "My King and my beloved pupil! I feel happy—that I alone in this great city of thine am a homeless beggar and the bearer of a potsherd, while many of thy other subjects dwell within these stately homes, and all the others have roofs over their heads, and eat off plates of gold and silver and other metal. If I had taught thee otherwise, with less restraint from evil ways than I did, I might perhaps have dwelt in a rich house and fed off gold, but all these others had been beggars by this time, under an unjust ruler, and borne potsherds. My King and my beloved pupil! have I not cause to be happy?"

The King throw himself from his horse on to the breast of his tutor, and they embraced each other and mingled tears. And the King proclaimed:

“ My tutor’s wise instructions had been confined to me alone, did I not publish to all my people by this episode the essence of them, as illustrated by that tutor’s conduct, that each of us should do his duty fearlessly, bearing in mind the good of others rather than his own. My tutor is restored to greater grants and lands and honors than he had before ! ”



CHAPTER XVIII.

SHIVAJI.

The rise and fall of the Marāṭhā power¹ in India is one of the most remarkable pictures offered in Indian history, so rapidly, apparently, did it spring to its full strength, so rapidly also did it crumble away as a dominating influence, though leaving behind it a group of States that should play a great part in Indian affairs in the future—Indore, Barodā, Gwālīor, Kholāpur, Dhār, Dewās with its Senior and Junior Princes. The uprush of this power, though startling in its suddenness, was from a spring that had been fed from hidden sources; the character of the Marāṭhās was strong, pious, capable, and their frames hardy and enduring; the system of village government, the Panchayet, developed a spirit of sturdy independence and self-control; the mountainous nature of the country, the mountains from 2000 to 5000 feet in height, developed hardy muscles; these mountains were crowned by forts, and some two hundred and eighty of these were captured, built or repaired by Shivājī; running

¹ Mr. Justice Ranade's *Rise of the Marāṭhā Power* should be read by every Hindu

and climbing, necessary qualities in the Marāṭhā soldiery, were found naturally in the Marāṭhā peasantry; the warlike mood had been fostered by three hundred years of struggle with the Muslims, and even where these had triumphed and had established Muslim States, the Hindus acted as ministers and exercised great political power. The Hindu kingdoms of Vijaynagar and Telangam held their own for long against the Muslim kingdoms of Bijāpur, Ahmednagar, Beḍar, Golconda and Berars, and these Paṭhān kingdoms would seek the aid of their Hindu rivals against the arms of the invading armies of the Mughals, owing allegiance to Delhi. These latter were gradually pressing into and subduing the Dekkan, though sturdily resisted and oft driven back. Moreover, a strong religious movement fed the strength and courage of the Marāṭhā races, and a large number of religious teachers, chief of whom were Tukārām and Rāmḍās, stimulated the religious fervor of the people, and gave to their arms the sanction of the holiest feelings.

Into this environment was born the child Shivāji (A. D. 1627), destined to sum up in himself all that was most fervid in Hindu religion, and most fiery and heroic in Hindu nationality. Brave to recklessness in adventure, he sought every critical decision by abandoning himself to prayer, until he passed into a state of extasy,

and would then speak words of which in his normal state he knew nothing; written down as he uttered them, these words formed the decision which he carried out with unswerving courage and obedience. Thus he became to his people the embodiment of religion as well as of martial valor, and incarnated in his own heroic figure Hindu faith and Hindu patriotism.

Shivâjî was the son of Shahâjî Bhonsle—the warrior who made and unmade Muhammadan Kings, and who traced his descent from the Mahârâshtrâs of Mewâr, thus transmitting to his son the splendid blood of the Sûryavamsha—and of Jijabai, Princess of a branch of the Yâdava line, settled in Mahârâshtra. Thus in Shivâjî blended the royal lines of Râjputâna, the Sûryavamsha and the Chandravamsha. She gave birth to her son in the fort Shivaner (some 24 miles from Poonâ), surrounded by her husband's foes, led by her own father Jâdhavrâo, who had joined the Mughals against the Dekkan Pathâns, led by Shahâjî. From his mother, heroic as became her blood, Shivâjî learned all his earliest lessons, and he adored her as the inspiration of his life.

His warrior life began with the capture of Toranâ in A. D. 1646, and he came to it well equipped for his task; he was a splendid horseman, and wielded well the sword and gun. Among

a race of climbers, he was pre-eminent, and his endurance was fabulous. With all his fiery qualities and fervid faith, he was tolerant in religious matters: "his orders were to do no harm to the Mosques, the Book of God, or the women of any one," wrote a Muslim author; in all his raids and conquests, not one Muhammaḍan Mosque was destroyed, despite the many Hinḍu temples that had been laid in ruins.

Shivājī's life is divided into four periods by Mr. Justice Raṇade; I. from A. D. 1646 to 1652, during which time he was employed in organising the district round Poonâ, seizing and repairing the hill-forts; II. from 1652 to 1662, when he was engaged in a conflict with Bijâpur, from which he issued successful, to face the Mughals; III. from 1662 to 1672, when he was fighting with the Mughals, and finally gained "from the Mughal Emperor a full and formal recognition of the new Marâṭhâ power;" IV. from his coronation in 1674 to his death in 1680, a period employed in organising and consolidating his dominions.

A characteristic story is told of the completion of the fortifications of Raigad, his seat of government. He appeared before the crowd he had gathered together, with a handsome golden bracelet and a bag of gold:

"See, brothers!" he cried; "these to the man who enters Râigad without rope or ladder, otherwise than by its gate."

A man sprang forward and breasted the steep ascent, and presently upon the ramparts a flag was waving: the prize was his, and the Chief took care to close the road by which the agile climber had mounted.

While Shivâji was struggling with Bijâpur, which held his father prisoner, he was negotiating with Delhi for recognition within his own sphere, and the Emperor Shah Jahan had promised to grant his requests if he would come to Delhi. In 1657, Shahâji was released by Bijâpur, but the struggle between Shivâji and Bijâpur only grew fiercer in its intensity. Plots and counterplots went on. Chandrarâo More, Chief of Jâoli, on the side of Bijâpur, aided a plot for Shivâji's assassination; Shivâji's friends answered by a counterplot to assassinate Chandrarâo; the first failed, the second succeeded, and Jaoli was added to the growing Marâthâ kingdom. Then against Shivâji, Bijâpur sent its best general, Afzulkhân the Pathân, with a great army, and he boasted he could capture "the mountain rat." He marched out against Shivâji and on his way desecrated Hindu temples, rousing to fury the religious feelings of the Marâthâs. They gathered round Shivâji's banner, and he arranged his

troops in ambush, while Afzulkhân, confident in his splendid army, encamped openly between Wâi and Mahâbaleshvar. By arrangement the two leaders met alone in the midst, for conference, both wily, both prepared to use or repel treachery. As the conference proceeded, formal courtesies gave way to hot words, and fierce anger found vent in threats; at last Afzulkhân, powerful and of large stature, seized the lithe and small Marâthâ Prince by the neck, and flung his left arm round him in fierce grip, holding him to inflict a fatal blow; but Shivâjî had not come unprepared for treachereous attack, and, throwing his supple arms round his powerful antagonist, he opened his hands, armed with keen blades, the "tiger-claws," and drew them sharply down the back of his assailant, ere he could strike. Afzulkhân fell, bleeding, dying, victim instead of gainer in the treachery planned by both. In the confusion that ensued, the ambushed Marâthâ enemy broke forth on the invading hosts and scattered them, and Shivâjî's victory was complete. Other victories followed, while in the north, Aurungzeb, struggling for the imperial throne, favoured Shivâjî, for whose assistance he hoped, while Bijâpur had long defied the Mughal sceptre.

But once securely seated on the throne of Delhi, he sent an army to seize Kalyân, Shivâjî's

northernmost possession (A. D. 1661), hoping to take advantage of both combatants, weakened in the struggle. In the following year Shivâji concluded peace with Bijâpur, and turned his arms against the invading Mughals, who had seized Poonâ. By a night-surprise, he drove them thence (A. D. 1663), and in the next year he invaded the Mughal territory, and captured Surat, the fleet he had created co-operating in the attack; Kanarâ was conquered in A. D. 1665, and his power grew with every year.

But Aurungzeb had allies in Râjputâna, for Râjâ Jaswant Sinha of Jodhpur, and Râjâ Jaya Sinha of Jayapur, were among the imperial commanders; Râjâ Jaya Sinha marched against Shivâji in A. D. 1665, and Shivâji, appealing as usual for guidance, was bidden by Bhavânî Devî to make peace with the Râjput Chief, and for the time to yield to him possession of some twenty forts; he obeyed, received in return recognition of his rule as Râjâ and of his hitherto denied right to levy chaugh, a tax on certain revenues. In the following year Aurungzeb invited Shivâji to Delhi, but, when the proud Chief was his guest, treated him with scant courtesy. Angry at heart, smooth in face, Shivâji left the imperial presence, and returned to his own camp within the city walls, and thence sent word that he prayed permission to return home. Aurung-

zeb, outwardly polite, begged him to stay, and secretly gave orders not to allow him to go outside the city walls. Thereupon the Marāṭhā Prince, too weak to fight, quietly sent away his few troops, leaving himself defenceless, much to the Emperor's delight, who saw ShivĀjī and his young son Shambājī helpless in his grasp. His troops safely away, ShivĀjī confined himself to his tent, and he was reported to be very ill; large quantities of sweets were brought daily in huge baskets to distribute to Brāhmanas and the poor, and the baskets passed in and out unchallenged. But one morning, very early, one outgoing basket contained ShivĀjī, and a second his son, and the bearers of the baskets, outside the city walls, stopped where two splendid horses were tethered; out sprang the two fugitives, and, leaping on the steeds, rode off at a hand-gallop, and next day reached Maṭhura; there ShivĀjī left his son, too young for the hardships the father faced unflinching. Disguised as a Sāḍhu, he went forward on foot, swimming rivers, racing over plains, to Allahabād, on to Benares, to Gayā, to Cutṭack, to Hyḍerahād, and appeared, gay and resolute, among his faithful people—a marvellous march, alone, unaided.

Quickly were the Muslims driven from the forts yielded to Rājā Jaya Sinha, who had been recalled to Delhi, and ere long the whole surren-

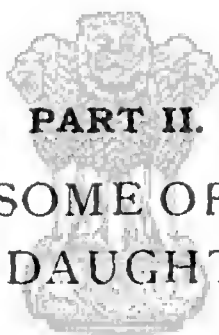
dered territory again owned Shivâjî's sway. Weary of the hopeless struggle, Aurungzeb's son, made Viceroy of the Dekkan, concluded peace with Shivâjî, and confirmed the former treaty, recognising his sovereign rights, including the levying of tribute on the Musalmân kingdoms of the Dekkan (A. D. 1667). Shivâjî was crowned in Râigad in 1674, as the Hindu Emperor, and the Marâṭhâ kingdom of the South faced the Mughal kingdom of the North.

The remainder of his life, too short for his kingdom but long enough for fame, was spent in consolidation, in organisation, in the encouragement of learning. He formed a Council of eight Ministers, heads of departments, the Chief or Prime Minister being styled the Peshvâ, and, choosing his ablest men for power, established a kingdom that promised to last. But he passed away suddenly and prematurely at the age of 53, in A. D. 1680, and left behind him a son, Sambhâjî, incapable of rule. Aurungzeb, three years later, swept down upon the Dekkan with an enormous army, and carried all before him; Râjâ Sambhâjî was captured and beheaded, and his young son Shâhu was taken prisoner (A. D. 1689). Râjârâm, Shivâjî's younger son, threw himself into the fray, acting as Regent for his nephew, and carrying on a harassing war against the invaders. It was continued after his death, and gradually

Aurangzeb's great army melted away, and he was forced to retreat, until, after terrible disasters, he died broken-hearted in Ahmednagar, in A. D. 1706, and left the Marâṭhās triumphant. Mahârâshṭra was free, after twenty-three years of war, and in A. D. 1708, Shâhu was crowned its King. He ruled for forty years, and round him grew up the great Marâṭhâ Federation, which became the dominant power in India throughout the eighteenth century, but, broken up by internal dissensions, it fell before the British early in the nineteenth.



PART II.
SOME OF
HER DAUGHTERS.



नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय



सत्यमेव जयते

CHAPTER I.

FAITHFUL THROUGH DEATH.

SĀVITRĪ, "a ray of light." Truly was this fair daughter of India a ray of light to husband and to husband's home. No name is dearer, perhaps, to the Indian heart, among purely human women, and so loved is she and so cherished in memory, that when a girl-bride is given to her young husband, her mother prays, as she kisses her farewell: "Mayst thou be as Sāvitṛī."

There lived long ago a King and Queen, who had for child a fair girl named SĀVITRĪ. Graceful she was as a young fawn, with soft dark eyes, and long hair black as night. And as she arrived at marriageable age, her parents sought a youth noble and gallant enough to be her bridegroom, and found none worthy of their pearl. But one day the maiden sought her mother, and whispered softly, as the red blood dyed her cheeks, that she had seen a youth to whose keeping her heart had flown; poor he was, but of noble race, living in a forest near at hand, and supporting by his labour his blind father and gentle mother, who had been King and Queen, but were now exiles, driven forth from home and realm by cruel

wrong. Handsome was he, and courteous, and of gentle speech, and he it was, and none other, that Sâvitrî would wed.

As her parents consulted together about their daughter's choice, a great Rîshi, named Nârada, came to their court, and they craved his counsel, wisest of all counsel that the world could yield. And he said, sadly and softly : " Wed not the maid to yon fair youth, for his span of life will be cut in twain by Death's scissors when twelve months have run from his marriage-day. Then will Sâvitrî be a widow ; sad lot for one so sweet."

Then her mother wept, and clasping her daughter close, prayed her to withdraw her love and seek a happier fate. " Let me not see thee widowed, O my darling, and thy bright sun setting in piteous night."

But Sâvitrî, clinging to her mother's neck and kissing away her tears, pleaded sweetly for permission to give her hand to him who had her heart in keeping, and at last she said : " Sweetest mother, Hîndu maid may love but once ; to love twice were shame, like the shame of the unchaste woman. Lo ! my heart is living in the breast of Satyavân, and if I wed another I shall be as an unfaithful and wanton wife. For in love lies marriage sacrament, and not in formal words." And her sweetness and her pathos were so win-

ning that her mother yielded, and the father's blessing was given, and the twain were wed.

Then Sâvitṛī doffed her royal raiment and put on simple garb, following meekly in her husband's steps to the poor forest-hut where her husband lived with his exiled parents. And there she lived in soft humility and all tender service of his loved ones, and kept the hut sweet and bright as a palace chamber, and cooked dainty dishes to tempt their appetite, and was servant, daughter, wife, all blent in one fair girl. And ever she nestled closer to her husband's heart in tenderest love, and he saw all his world in her deep eyes.

Thus fled the months till twelve had well-nigh sped, and ever Sâvitṛī's fond heart grew heavier, though smiles dwelt on her lips, for she remembered the prophecy of Nârada, and knew that his words might not fail. And ever more and more piteously she prayed for the life she loved, and her woman's wits sought to find a way out of the net that was closing in around her. But no way she found, and no Angel of Deliverance came in answer to her prayer.

At last the death-day dawned, and Sâvitṛī with breaking heart kept close to her husband's side. Quoth Satyavân: "The wood-heap is low; I go to cut some fuel." And he lifted his axe and went, Sâvitṛī followed on his heels.

"What! sweetheart, wouldst thou forth? The way is rough for tender feet like thine."

"No way is rough where my lord's feet have trodden," said she, with loving smile. "I am weary of the hut, and would lie and watch thee at thy work." So she had her way and went. And as he plied the axe with swift strong strokes, she watched him warily, watched lest Death should also strike.

As noon drew near he grew weary, and fierce pain smote his head, so that he staggered back dizzily, and Sāvitrī sprang up and caught him in her arms. "Lie down, beloved," she breathed, "lie down, and place thy head upon my lap. Sleep, dear heart, and it may be that the pain will pass." But she knew in her broken heart that when the pain passed, her husband's soul would pass with it, for lo! the time was come, and the shadow of Death drew near. And soon Death stooped over the fainting man, and cast his noose around the struggling soul and drew it forth, and went.

Then Sāvitrī, with eyes love-opened, saw her husband's soul led captive by Death, and sprang to her feet and followed swiftly after. And Death saw her and said gently: "Lady, thy time is not come. Sweet life is yet thine own. Go back and live."

"Whither goes the husband, thither goes the wife," she answered. "Thou must not break the marriage bond, O Death! And I have boon to crave of thee, for the sight of a great one, such as thou art, may not pass unfruitful."

"Ask as thou wilt, gentle lady. Any boon is thine, save thy husband's life."

Then, mindful of filial duty in her anguish, she folded her hands and said: "Great Death, give to my husband's father his lost vision, and the kingdom rent from him by crime."

"Thy prayer is granted, lady of sweet smiles. Now go thy way."

But still she followed weeping sorely, and stumbling, for her eyes were blind with tears. And she heeded not that thorns pierced her and that rocks bruised her, for she heeded only her husband's soul, sleeping in the bosom of Death. Then Death frowned, and his frown was as the dark cloud that heralds the lightning flash. "Go back," he said sternly, and his voice was as thunder. "Dare not to face the terrors of Death's path."

"Terror couches only where love is absent," said Śaṁṣṛī. "I know no fear where he is near to guard." And the way grew rougher, and hideous forms gloomed through the gathering dusk, as she held steadily on.

Then pity touched the gentle heart of Death, pity for her youth and beauty, her useless courage and her dire fate. "Take yet a boon, sweet girl," he said, "and then go on thy way."

"Give a hundred sons, O Death," she spake. "Then shall my lonely life be gladdened once again."

"Thy wish is granted, O fairest of earth's daughters. Now go, with the blessing of the Gods." But Sāvitrī followed ever, and her tears fell less fast.

"Why follow you still, O foolish one, the path of Death? Go back, lest I should snare thee ere thy time."

"I only wait thy pleasure, mighty Lord. Sons hast thou given me, but in the gift lies also the father of my sons. For Hindu wife may have no second lord, else is she adulterous. O great God Death, thou wouldst not have me sin, and become vile and a dishonor to my race. Give me then back my husband, whom thou hast promised in promising me sons."

Then Death was conquered by her woman's wit, and, smiling, gave into her arms her husband's sleeping soul, and bade her hasten back where yet his corpse lay warm. And he blessed her, saying: "Be India's wives like thee, O

faithful one, and be her men loved as Satyavân by thee."

Then Sâvitri hastened back to the place where Satyavân was lying, and his soul entered into his body, and he rose up on his feet. But Sâvitri told him naught, and led him gently home, where they found his father awaiting them open-eyed, and round the hut were gathered the nobles of his kingdom, ready to take him back to land and crown.



नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

CHAPTER II.

REJECTED AND CROWNED.

Over the plain and into the cool forest depths sped the chariot of the King after a bounding deer. Steadily it drew nearer the panting creature, and the King was about to let fly the long shaft, when suddenly from out the cool glades rang clear voices: "Slay not the deer of the Āshrama!" The King stayed his bow, and checked the speed of the chariot. The hermits blessed him for his mercy "with a son virtuous and glorious."

"Alight, O protector of thy people, yonder the Āshrama of Sage Kanva, upon Mālinī's green bank. There receive hospitality."

About him King Dushyanta saw the delicious forest aisles; overhead the parrots screamed in happy security; the deer grazed fearlessly near; the bees hummed busily about the brilliant flowers of tree and clinging vine. Kidding himself of all ornaments, the King was passing on to the Āshrama, when he heard the rippling merry laughter of young girls, and through the sheltering foliage saw three maids approach. They were

Shakuntalâ and her two friends, who, clad in the rough bark dress of the Âshrama, had come to water the trees. As Shakuntalâ, loveliest of the three, poured the water upon the tender Vanajyotṣna (moonlight of the forest), a black bee buzzed forth and seemed to deem her fair face sweeter than the starry flowers, for it pursued her eagerly as she fled from side to side.

"Save me from this creature," she cried to her friends, but both laughingly answered: "Upon King Dushyanta call, protector of the forest; he will save thee."

After a moment's hesitation, the King stepped from behind the foliage, and, brushing aside the bee, bowed courteously before the startled maiden. "Not while King Dushyanta lives shall fear assail the dwellers in this holy forest." Then, turning to Shakuntalâ: "Fair maid, obtainest thou the fruits of thy devotion?"

But, with soft blushing face held shyly down, Shakuntalâ answered not; nor would she move when her friends asked her to bring from the hut fresh fruits for their guest, while they gave him cool water wherewith to lave hot hands and feet. Then, as in the shade they sat, Anasūya and Priyamvadâ asked the King:

"We ask thee, encouraged by thy courtesy, what thy royal lineage, what the country that

mourns thy absence, and why thou comest hither to this place of penance."

Not wishing to be known, the King replied : " By royal Dushyanta's command I come to see whether the Rishis of this grove perform the holy rites in peace."

The King then asked them many things about Shakuntalâ, for whom he felt swift love growing in his heart, and they told him how she was not own daughter of Sage Kaṇva, but born of great Kaushika and of Menakâ—Apsarâ mother—and by Kaṇva reared. And all the while Shakuntalâ stood near, and in her heart too glowed love for this majestic guest.

Days passed, and still the King lingered, helping the ascetics at the sacrifices, and learning each day to love Shakuntalâ more deeply.

One evening as he passed a flowery bower, he heard his own name spoken ; he peeped through the leaves, and saw Shakuntalâ lying weariedly upon the cool white marble couch with fragrant lotuses strewn, while about her clustered her girl friends. In reply to their questions, he heard her read aloud the verse that she had written on a lotus leaf with her little nails, and wherein she made sweet confession of her love for him : " Ah, cruel one, thy heart I know not, but me love pains day and night."

Great joy shone upon the King's face as he swiftly entered: "Ever beauteous one, couldst thou but see my heart, thou wouldst know that love burns me incessantly."

Some days afterwards urgent summons called the King away, but ere he went he placed upon Shakuntalâ's finger his own signet ring: "By this to pledge thee mine," he whispered.

Unhappy Shakuntalâ, wandering absently, met Durvâsa, fiery-tempered Sage. Her mind all fixed on Dushyanta, she heeded him not, so hot curse he spake: "Thou insulter of guests, me, holy Sage, thou heedest not. May he upon whom thy mind is fixed forget thee." And Priyamvadâ heard, and fled after him as he marched angrily away; at his feet she flung herself, and begged mercy for her friend. "My words can have no falsification, but this will I do, that upon revealing some object of recognition the curse will cease." Some time afterwards Kâshyapa (Kaṇva) returned from his journey to far Somatīrtha. As he entered the door a voice cried: "King Dushyanta has taken thy daughter in marriage. Great and glorious will be the son born to her."

Kâshyapa made ready to send Shakuntalâ to her husband. As she bathed in the stream, the King's ring slipped from her finger, but she did not notice it. At the time of robing, Kâshyapa

sent her exquisite dress and jewels that fairy hands had held out from the trees and flowers, and in these her friends adorned her.

Sadly she parted from the beloved friends of the forest, and with aged Gautamî set out, guarded by a band of ascetics.

The King was in one of the palace halls, when a messenger entered, saying that some of the forest hermits had come accompanied by women, and bringing a message from revered Kâshyapa.

"Ask the priest to greet them, and conduct them to the sacrificial place, where I will await them."

They entered, with veiled and trembling Shakuntalâ in their midst.

With raised hands they cried: "Be victorious, O King."

"I salute you. Does danger threaten? Is it well with great Kâshyapa? With what commands honors he me?"

"O King, when thou art protector of men, how should evil befall them? Great Kâshyapa, whom Nature obeys, how can aught be ill with him? But thus he asks: Thou hast wed my most precious daughter; I, loving both, give my blessing. Take then thy wife, that she perform the sacred ceremonies in peace with thee."

Slowly and haughtily the King asked : " What strange thing is this thou speakest ? "

Shāraṅgava wonderingly replied : " Thou, Lord, knowest well that 'tis meet for wives to dwell with their husbands. "

" And thou darest affirm that I this lady have wed ? Nay, to do evil in secret is not the nature of the King. "

Heavy grew Shakuntalâ's heart. High rose the wrath of Shāraṅgava as he cried : " Thou hast been deemed by the Sage as worthy this, his highest gift, which thou scornfully refusest. " " Raise thy veil, child, " whispered Gauṭamî, " perchance 'twill bring memory to his Majesty. "

In all her loveliness Shakuntalâ stood revealed, only to be again rejected.

" Speak thou to him, Shakuntalâ, and convince him, " begged another. " Alas, " she murmured, " but little use. " Then aloud : " O Paurava, why disown me, thou, who, in the far hermitage, didst swear eternal love ? "

In horror the King closed his ears and exclaimed : " God forbid ! why seekest thou to stain a fair name and sully thine own ? "

" My words I prove by the ring thou gavest. " She felt her finger—but the ring was gone. " O Gauṭamî, " she gasped in despair.

"Child, it fell as thou didst bathe in the sacred stream."

"Clever indeed the wit of women," sneered the King.

"Ah Lord," cried Shakuntalâ, "does no memory stir of that happy day when together we sat in the fragrant bower, and the fawn drank from my hand instead of thine—fearing thee, a stranger."

"'Tis only evil women who concoct such untruths."

"Not so, Lord," bravely spake Gauṭamî, "living simply 'mid the hermits, Shakuntalâ is guileless."

"Old woman," returned Dushyanṭa rudely, "women, the most cunning of all creatures, most truly know the art of deception."

"Base one, by thyself thou judgest all," indignantly said Shakuntalâ. "Thou, seeming honest, art most false. Poison is in thy heart. I have been deceived by the honey of thy lips." And she wept.

Useless all their efforts; the curse of Dṛuvâsa held fast the King's memory.

"King," said at last the exasperated Shâraṅgava, "this thy wife; reject her or receive her as thou wilt: Gauṭamî, come." And they

all turned away, leaving Shakunṭalā alone. But she followed them, her big, soft eyes full of tears, her little hands out-stretched, as she piteously cried: "Wilt thou also abandon me?" "Poor child," said Gauṭamī, "what is she to do?" Angrily Shāraṅgava turned upon her: "Shameless girl, art thou independent? Remain in thy husband's house, though it be but as a menial."

The King's voice cried after them: "'Tis no wife of mine."

Gently spake the priest: "O King, the wise have said that thy first-born son for great glory is destined. If thou hast forgotten that this girl is thy wife, let her remain in my house till her child is born; then, should it reveal the marks of glory, acknowledge her; if not, send her back to her father."

"It seemeth wise," answered the King.

As poor Shakunṭalā passed out with the kindly priest, a strange noise was heard. Alone the priest returned, amazed his face. "What is it?" asked eagerly Dushyaṅṭa.

"A miracle, sire; for as I led the child away, aloud in despair she called upon her stars; instantly a great flash of light in female form swept her away to the home of the Apsarās."

The King's heart struggled sore against the curse laid upon his mind, and he went sadly out.

* * * *

To the mayor was brought a struggling prisoner, roughly dragged into his presence by the guards.

"Tell, thief, whence you stole the King's jewelled ring," they ordered, as they rained blows upon him.

"Let the man tell his story," said the mayor.

"Great one, a poor fisherman I, who maintain my family by catching and selling fish. But a few days ago a big fish came into my nets, and upon opening it there lay within a splendid ring. All that comes into my nets is mine; therefore I took the ring round for sale; while doing so these guards seized me. Such my story. My life is in thy hands."

"Take him to the palace," commanded the mayor, "and I will enquire if aught be known of this matter."

"Come, thief," said the guards as they dragged him roughly after the mayor, and they taunted him with death, while they awaited the result of the mayor's audience with the King. But it was not with warrant of death that the mayor returned. "Set the man free. This gift, the full value of the ring, His Majesty bestows upon this fortunate man." The guards put loving arms around the freed man, and called him "beloved

friend," and coaxed him to honor their new-found friendship in wine.

But the ring flung wide the gates of memory for the King; all the past came surging back, and bitter remorse possessed him for his repudiation of tender, true Shakuntalâ. Sleep came not to him; the festivals he forbade; at last he determined to set out upon a pilgrimage, to do penance for his wrong action. In ascetic robes he went from spot to spot of the forest, harrowing his mind afresh at every well-remembered place. He took out the ring and reproached it: "Ah! did I not say as I put thee upon the finger of my beloved: Count each day one letter of my name engraved upon this ring, and, ere to its end thou reachest, my attendants will come to lead thee home to me. And, insensate thing, thou slippedst from her tiny hand. O beloved, appear, appear, for I am utterly broken with remorse."

The picture of Shakuntalâ that he painted only brought him fresh sorrow—to see but a likeness and not a reality. But the Devas themselves were preparing to help him regain his wife.

Ere long came Mâṭali, charioteer of Lord Indra, with message: "A demon host, not to be conquered by mighty Indra, thou art to destroy utterly, O King."

"I come, for the commands of Indra are to be

obeyed. Worthy minister *Phīṣhuna* will protect my subjects, while I draw my bow in the honored service of the Gods." And mounting the chariot with *Māṭali*, *Dushyanta* sped through the heavens to other realms. There he routed the demon race, and freed the *Devas* from their tormentors. With seat upon his own throne by his side did *Indra* honor him in the presence of all his hosts. Then back through the wonders of starry space the chariot neared earth once more. A great mountain they saw, whence emanated golden streams of light—abode of *Marichi* and his wife, home of the *Kimpuruṣhas*, practising severe and awful yoga. "Let us descend," said the King, "and pay homage to *Marichi*, peerless *Yogi*." The chariot, shadowless, noiseless, reached earth, and both alighted near the hermitage. *Māṭali* went to apprise the Sage of *Dushyanta's* arrival, who, as he sat beneath the *Ashoka* tree, saw a sturdy little boy come rushing towards him, dragging a lion-cub, and followed by two hermitage women, who vainly endeavored to make him cease from tormenting the forest creature. The child only laughed, and demanded of the cub: "Open your mouth, lion; I want to count your teeth."

"Let the poor beast be, and we will bring thee other toy," coaxed the women. "Bring it," ordered the lad, with one hand outstretched, but with the other holding tight the struggling chok-

ing cub. In the struggle an amulet that he wore fell to the ground. The women, seeing the King, begged that he would release the cub. Smilingly and gently he did so, and felt strangely moved at the touch of the child, while the women exclaimed at the likeness between them. When the King asked his name and birth, the women declared him of the Puru race; his mother born of nymph and repudiated by her husband. One woman cried out in dismay that the amulet was missing. As Dushyanta stooped to pick it up, they shrieked: "Don't touch it," but he lifted it up—whereat their astonishment was extreme. "None," they said, "can touch this, save the child, his father, or his mother, on pain of it turning to a hideous serpent, which strikes with poisonous fang the unwary hand." More and more glad grew the King, as each proof that this was his own child came to him. The lad wanted to go with the women, who were off to tell Shakuntalâ the joyous news. "Come with me to greet thy mother," said the King. "My father is Dushyanta, not you." At the which the King smiled.

Shakuntalâ came forward eagerly, yet doubtfully. Robed in the sad hermit dress, with hair pulled roughly back into a single knot, her heart throbbed with sweet hope. But this pale man looked not like the radiant lover who had won her

heart. Their boy held out his arms to her crying : " Mother, this man calls me his son."

" Dear one, all misery is now at an end ; dost thou know me ?"

" 'Tis indeed my Lord," whispered Shakuntalâ; then falteringly from her lips came the words : " Victory to my Lord." The King bent humbly at the feet of the pale fair woman to whom his heart gave complete allegiance. " Cast aside," he entreated, " all censure of my conduct, some great curse blinded me ; it has gone, and I am free to love thee."

" Rise, dear Lord, 'twas not fault of thine, but the due punishment of an evil deed of mine in another birth."

The King took her close to his heart and wiped away the tears that hung heavily on her long lashes. Mâtali came to lead them, united for evermore, to the elders. Many the blessings that they showered upon that matchless pair, and upon their brave bright son. And one last blessing begged the King, ore, in supremest joy, he led home dear wife and child : " Let the saying of old be true : That the King seek ever the welfare of his people ; that no unjust words from his lips come forth ; that great Shiva in his mercy release him from rebirth."

CHAPTER III.

THROUGH DEEP WATERS.

There lived once a King, named Nala, son of Virasena, Lord of Nishadha. Royal was he in bearing, handsome and strong, ruling with firm hand his realm, in the Vedas well-read, and commander of great hosts. But he was still unwed.

In Vidarbha ruled King Bhîma, father of three sons and of one fair daughter, Damayanî. Fairest was she among the maids of earth, slender, with lotus-eyes, and she was standing "where womanhood and childhood meet," but as yet had given her heart to none.

And in King Bhîma's court men praised Nala, King of Nishadha, and told of his great prowess and his noble life. And the damsels round the girl Princess prattled, as women will of a strong man, and all declared with one voice that if the unmatched Damayanî could find amid the Kings of earth one who was worthy to be her lord and lead her home, then surely King Nala alone would be that happy bridegroom.

And in King Nala's court all spoke of

Damayanṭī as rumour painted her, and ever talked about her peerless beauty and her matchless virtues, and they said that if a King as great as Nala could find anywhere a bride worthy to be his, then surely was Damayanṭī that fair bride.

And thus, at last, Nala loved the unseen Damayanṭī, and Damayanṭī's maiden thoughts began to circle round a dream of Nala, and as the days went by the love increased.

One day, as Nala wandered through his groves, he saw a flock of swans, and deftly catching one, he held it playfully. Then to his wonder the swan spake with human voice:

"Slay me not, gentle King, but set me free. Then will I haste on swiftest wing to the walled garden where Damayanṭī dwells, and in her ear will I sing thy praises, so that her thoughts shall turn to none but thee."

Nala released the swan with a gentle caress, and the bird, soaring high in air, darted swiftly towards Vidarbha, where Damayanṭī dwelt, and the whole flock streamed after him.

Down into the bevy of fair maidens dropped the birds, and, laughing, the girls ran after the snowy creatures in every direction, chasing them with laughter musical as mountain streams. One swan fluttered before Damayanṭī, and, now hastening and now slackening, lured her apart from the

maiden throng, and flying to a pillar close at hand, he spake:

"In Nishadha, O fairest Damayanṭī, Nala dwells, noblest of men and Kings. Fair as the twin Asvins he is, and nowhere can his peer be found. Devas have I seen, and heaven's musicians too, but none approaches Nala in worth and beauty. Pearl of women thou, he Prince of men. Happy the union of such a matchless pair."

She heard and pondered long.

"Speak thou to Nala too," she said at last.

After this the thoughts of Damayanṭī constantly winged their way to Nala, and she grew pale and sad; then said King Bhīma, her father: "Surely the time has come when Damayanṭī should wed," and he sent far and wide the summons:

"O Kings of the earth, come ye to the Svayamvara."

Then from all sides gathered the Lords of Earth, and splendid among them came Nala, King of Nishadha. To the Svayamvara came also the Devas Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Yama, and, in playful teasing, the Devas all took Nala's form, so that Damayanṭī, seeking with her eyes the Prince to whom she had vowed herself in her heart, saw five Nalas, indistinguishable the one from the other. Meekly she prayed: "O immor-

tal Devas, as I have vowed myself to my true Lord, and may not give myself to another, shew ye now yourselves forth as what ye are, that I may see the earth-born to whom alone I belong."

Then the bright Devas, moved by her sweet gentleness and loyalty, shewed themselves, with eyes unmoving, shadowless, with unfaded garlands, and touching not the earth; and Damayanți approached the dust-stained Nala, with feet planted firmly on the earth, with shadow falling behind him, and with garland limp and faded; round his neck she threw the marriage garland, and touched his garment's hem, and aloud he cried: "O peerless maid, who, wooed by the Devas themselves, choolest me, the earth-born, as thy husband, know thou, so long as breath is in this body, that I am thine, and thine alone."

Then were they wedded, matchless bridegroom, matchless bride, and long they dwelt in peace and honor, and two fair children played around their feet.

But in unclouded bliss men may not ever dwell, for in the surfeit of joy both mind and body grow languid and inert, and manhood grows rotten. And Nala, careless with his long happiness, and longing for new stimulus, began to play dice with Pushkara his brother, and played, and played again. And ever he played and lost, and played and lost, till ministers and people

pleaded with their King to cease from this madness of gambling, and return again to royal duty and a sovereign's cares. But still he played and lost.

Then Damayanți came, with eyes tear-filled and gentle words: "Ah good my Lord, thy people wait thee, and ruin threatens thy fair realm."

But still he played and lost, unheeding. Again, brought by ministers and people, Damayanți strove to win him from his madness, and again she failed. And still he played and lost, till all was lost.

Then arose Damayanti, firm and strong, and, calling the charioteer, Vârșbucya, she bade him take her children to her father, that they might be beyond the storm that soon would break; and quietly, alone, she waited for the end.

Listen, ah! listen. What are these dragging, heavy footsteps, stumbling along the passage to her room? Surely that is not the proud firm tread of Nala, the warrior-king. Aye! it is Nala, but Nala possessed with the demon of gambling. He enters, his eyes wandering, his mouth drooping; his kingly robes have been rent away to pay his gambler's debts; no royal jewel shines upon his forehead; the pearls and emeralds that ringed his throat, worth a kingdom's ransom, are all

gone. One cloth scarce veils his broad chest and massive limbs.

"Come, wife," he murmurs hoarsely. "Come, thou alone art left to Nala."

Swiftly she doffs her raiment, and, clad but in one cloth also, she follows him without a word. The wretched pair wander forth, friendless, and for many days and nights the bushes offer their only food, the forest streamlet their only drink. At last, some birds, settling near, tempt Nala to find in them a fuller meal, and, snatching off his cloth he flings it over them; but lo! the strong-winged birds fly up, and carry off the garment, and Nala is left naked. The two walk on, close together, the single garment of Damayanṭi thrown round them both. Tenderly he points the way to her father's court.

"Go, my beloved, go home and take shelter with thy father, and comfort thy little ones. Thy tender limbs cannot support the roughness of the forest life. My heart will lose its burden, knowing thee sheltered and secure."

"Ah! dearest Lord," said Damayanṭi softly, "send not away thy faithful wife. No shelter, no security, have I, save by thy side, and in thine arms. Like a healing herb in sickness, O my husband, so is a wife in sorrow."

Night had fallen, and they crept within a

hut, and fell asleep side by side. Ere long Nala awoke, and, leaning on his arm, he gazed sadly at his sleeping wife.

"Heart of my heart," he breathed, "life of my life, mother of my son, what may I do to make amends for the ruin I have brought on thee, my loved one? I am thy curse, who was thy blessing."

Half mad with misery he rose, and left the hut. Again and again he returned; again and again he went. Was it better for her that he should go or stay? A sword lay on the ground; he picked it up, and with its keen edge shore through the cloth which covered his wife. Wrapping the half round him, with desperate resolution he rushed forth, and for love's sake left what most he loved. "When she finds me gone," he muttered, "she will needs go to her father, and live secure."

With the dawn, the deserted wife awoke. At first, she thought nothing of his absence, but as the sun rose higher and he came not, fear assailed her, and she went forth to seek him. Up and down she went, hither and thither, first walking, then running, at last desperately racing in every direction, uttering wild cries: "Niṣhaḍha's King, where art thou? Lord of Damayanṭī, come. Oh, you are hiding in play, to tease me; but I am

frightened, I am crying, husband, husband, come ! ”

But only the echo mocked her, and when the echo ceased, silence fell. As she wandered into thicker forests, suddenly a huge serpent up-reared its hideous head, and caught her in its coils. Loud shrieked the helpless woman in her fear ; then gave herself to death :

“ Alas, my husband, I die. Who will comfort thee in sorrow when I am gone ? ”

A passing huntsman saw her peril, and, sending a keen shaft through the serpent’s head, freed her from her foe. With gracious words she thanked him, and he brought her food and water ; then, waxing bolder, and dazzled by her fair beauty, he sought to comfort her with caressing words. Proudly she sprang erect, and never had she looked more queenly ; helpless, alone, she knew no fear.

“ By my faith and love to my one Lord, and by my stainless chastity, die, O base one, who would shame the helpless woman.”

And a flame flashed forth, and he fell shrivelled, blackened, to earth.

Again she went on alone, fearless, undismayed, her heart wrung with anguish but her courage high. The tiger saw her, and slunk abashed into the thicket. The deer saw her, and

came nestling to her side. The jackal and the wolf, the boar and the buffalo, slipped aside to let her pass. But nowhere were her eyes gladdened with the sight of Nala, her beloved.

At last, after long wanderings, she met a caravan of merchants, and travelled with them; but a herd of wild elephants trampled on the camp that same night, and the merchants, ascribing their bad fortune to her, sought to slay her, and she fled, and wandered on till, foot-sore, travel-stained, with soiled half-cloth, and matted tangled hair, she found herself in Chedi. She dragged herself wearily along, a tail of laughing boys after her, making fun of her misery, as thoughtless boys will. But the gentle Queen-Mother saw her, from the palace-terrace, and sent a maid to bring her in, struck by the stately beauty that even her rags and grime could not wholly veil. To her Damayantī told her sad story, without revealing her name, and the noble lady gave her shelter, and placed her with her young daughter, and there for awhile she dwelt, sad but secure.

Meanwhile Nala, whose form had been magically changed by a serpent whom he had saved, had taken service as charioteer, under the name of Vāhuka, with Rituparṣa, King of Ayodhya.

King Bhīma, Damayantī's father, was sending messengers out to seek for his daughter and her

husband, and one of these, Sudeva, coming to Ohedi, recognised Damayanti and revealed her identity, when it appeared that Damayanti was the niece of the Queen-Mother, her own sister's daughter. Then the Queen-Mother sent Damayanti to Vidarbha, with all honor, and the sad wife dwelt again in her girlhood's home, with her little children.

In vain did messengers search everywhere for the lost Nala, and Damayanti's heart sank lower and lower. Was he, perchance, aware of her return, and too proud to come as exile where he had come as bridegroom in royal state? At last, fancying from a report of the marvellous skill of Vâhuka the charioteer, that he might be Nala, whose skill with horses was unrivalled, she hit upon the desperate expedient of sending word to King Rituparna that she proposed, as King Nala was lost, to hold a second Svayamvara; she fixed a day so near at hand that only Nala's skill with horses would enable the King to reach Vidarbha in time.

King Rituparna, calling his chariot, at once set forth with his charioteer, and, arriving in time, was surprised to find no preparations for a Svayamvara. King Bhîma took him aside, to explain the situation, and Nala, sore and angry at heart, betook himself and his horses to the stable.

With swift intuition Damayanṭī's glad heart sang as though her beloved were there, but wonder seized her when, looking from her window, she saw the stunted form of Vāhuka beside the panting horses.

"Haste thee, Keshinī," she said, calling to one of her maidens, "and question that strange-looking charioteer. Speak of the messengers sent in search for the King of Nishadha, and ask if he has heard aught thereof."

Skilfully Keshinī questioned Vāhuka, and, hurrying back to her mistress, told her that Vāhuka had showed much emotion in his answers. Moreover many strange portents had occurred; the vessels filled with water at his glance; the dry grass flamed as he held it up to the sun, but did not burn his hand; the flowers he touched grew fresh and fragrant: "Never mortal have I seen like this."

"Take the children to him, Keshinī," said Damayanṭī, and, when Vāhuka saw them, he clasped them to his breast, his tears raining down on their bright heads. Then Keshinī, returning, told of what had happened, and Vāhuka was bidden to the palace, and ushered into the room where stood Damayanṭī.

They gazed upon each other silently. Then spake Damayanṭī:

“Knowest thou, O charioteer, of one who left in the forest the wife to whom he had sworn troth by the marriage fire?”

“Gaming, I lost my realm,” answered Nala; “I left thee because I loved thee too well to drag thee with me. But thou, fairest and sweetest, how canst thou choose a second husband, being mine?”

“For thee I rejected the Devas, O my husband, and from thee my faith has never swerved. 'Twas but a wile, to draw thee hither, thou who wouldst not come. Let the Devas, whom for thee I rejected, bear witness to my truth.”

Then from the air sounded out voices, mighty as the thunder: “For three years have we watched her, and she has never swerved from truth and loyalty. Take to thine arms, O Nala, thy faithful wife.”

Thus all troubles ended, and Nala and Damayanî returned home with their children, and all the land rejoiced and was at peace.

CHAPTER IV.

HEAVEN-DESCENDED.

There was grief in Svarga; the Gandharvas stood mute, and no melodies were wafted on the airs of heaven; the Apsarâs had flung off their garlands, and big tears dimmed their shining eyes; the brow of Indra was thunderous, and his stern gaze was bent upon a form that lay stretched before his throne, a form fair as the snows of Himavat, and rose-touched as the cloud kissed into blushing by the rays of Sûrya. Silence reigned, unbroken save by the faint sobs coming from the prostrate nymph.

At last, the stillness is shattered; Indra speaks: "Go hence, fair girl, and work thy karma out on the dull plains of earth, far from the Svarga joys. Yet list! one promise I will make to cheer thy days of penance. If, while thou livest in thine earthly home, some object touch thee which has breathed our heavenly air, then shall thy earthly body fall from thee, as husk from swelling grain, and homewards shalt thou come, the curse exhausted."

He spake, and the fair maiden raised her

head, and moving forward cast her hands about his feet in mute farewell. And hark ! a sweeter fuller Voice sounds through the sorrow-laden air, and cleaves it as a sun-ray cleaves the clouds. As those melodious accents turn the air to music, all on their faces prostrate fall, and thus the Voice declares :

“The time approaches when again on earth must I be born to slay embodied wrong ; the Earth begins to sink beneath the heavy tread of evil’s gathering hosts. Go thou, my child, and, clad in fairest form of woman, wed thou the blameless Aja, Lord of the Solar Race ; for in his royal line will I take birth, grandson of him who shall thy husband be. Thus shall a curse be turned into a boon, and life on earth shall knit thee nearer to Life Supreme.”

Then silence fell again, but now full filled with memory of music uncomparèd. Sweet blossoms filled the air, and rained most thickly where that fair form was clasping Indra’s feet. When, with a sigh of deep delight, the heavenly crowd awoke from that rapt trance of bliss, and, rising, glanced where erst the maiden lay, behold ! the place was empty, save for a pile of flowers, flowers of Vaikunṭha, white and rose as she.

Joy was there in the palace of the King, for lo! King Aja led his bride around the marriage fire. And as the seventh step was taken, that wove the bridal knot past all untying, sweet strains of music stirred the fragrant air, and filled the palace-courts with sound of richer melody than earth could yield. And the bride raised her drooping head, bending as bends a flower from slender stem, and o'er her sweet face, fair beyond compare, there passed a wave of wondering glad surprise, wherein were blent marvel and memory—half memory and half marvel. Aja saw, and shared the marvel, not the memory. But deep in Indumatī's heart there stirred a pulse of strange new life, that thrilled her being with deepest sweetest rapture, and her lovely eyes—wells whose blue depths held only innocence—shone forth as though the stars were mirrored in them.

Awhile they dwelt in peace, King Aja and his Queen Indumatī, and all their days were filled with joy. At last one eve they sat, wrapped in sweet converse, until silence fell and folded them in peace, sweeter than words.

A strain of music sounded overhead, and she, the fair Queen, listened with uplifted hand: "My Lord, I hear the music of my home."

"What home, Sweet Heart? Is it not here,

thy home? what home is thine, outside thy husband's heart?"

She flung her soft arms round him, and spake low, in whisper sweet and tender: "Ah dear Lord! truly I dwell within thine heart for aye. But Indumatî comes from other home, and goeth whence she came. And thou shalt come. I go before, to deck the Svârgan bower where we shall dwell, and soon"—

Her sweet voice broke as a fair garland fell, fell from the empty air it seemed, and struck her softly. As a flower falls, o'erweighted with the snow that covers it, Indumatî bent forward, fell, and lay.

King Aja, thinking it a passing faint, caused by a shock of fear, lifted her tenderly upon his knees. But lo! the sweet life-breath passed from her half-opened lips, and the rich garland, woven of Svarga-gathered flowers, shone all the brighter as her spirit fled. For the mere touch of those celestial blooms sufficed to set her free, to leave him lone. For it had fallen from one who passed from Svarga, bent on mission high, to earth.

* * * * *

On earth, the empty palace of the King was filled with sobs for laughter. But in Svarga there was joy.

CHAPTER V.

THE LOTUS-FLOWER OF CHITTOR.

Rājā Hamir Sinha of the Chohan family, King of Sinhadvipa, had one beauteous daughter—clever, brave Padmāvatī (or Padmini). Regent Bhīmsi of Chittor¹ she married, and far o'er the land spread the praise of the gracious, lovely lady; even unto the ears of Alā-u-ddīn, Emperor of Delhi, who straightway swore that he would win her for himself. Taking his great army, he pitched his tents before Chittor, and sent forth to the proud Regent his wild demand:

“Give to me thy fair wife Padmāvatī, lest I slay thee and thine utterly.” For answer the dauntless Rājputs came pouring forth, with the insulted Bhīmsi at their head, and furious battle waged, till Alā-u-ddīn was beaten, and the victorious Rājputs returned to the fortress.

Again came a message from the Emperor:

“Of the unrivalled beauty of thy lady have I heard, and but to see her come I thus. Grant but one request, O Bhīmsi, nor deem it wrong. Let me but see her all-glorious form within a

¹ See p. 27. The Rājā was a boy.

glass reflected. Then will my desire be satisfied, and I will take hence my army. "

"Never," was the first retort that rose hotly to the Regent's lips. But ask of Padmâvatî; what would she do? And steadily she sent answer: "Grant, O Lord, this request, that my beauty bring not the curse of utter destruction upon our brave warriors; 'tis but my reflection that he asks—and the Prince is great." Then reply sent Bhîmsi: "'To-morrow, at noon, come weaponless and alone, and thy wish will find fulfilment."

And Ala-u-ddin knew that a Râjput never broke his word, so alone he went unfearing 'midst his unarmed foes—courteously had they laid aside the dress of war to greet the defenceless Emperor.

Grimly and at once Bhîmsi led him within the palace, to where the queenly Padmâvatî awaited them. Screened from view, yet reflected in a great, clear mirror, it seemed to the Paṭhân that she was fairer than Apsarâ, more radiantly beautiful than full splendid moon, more glorious e'en than peerless Raṭî, wife of Kâmaḍev. Once, twice, thrice, he gazed, and gazed again, nor satiety found. Strongly one thought possessed him: How to win her? He turned to go and full courteously: "Râṇâjî," he said, "to-day deep

pleasure mine. No human tongue can fully tell the beauty of thy Queen. Never such exquisite loveliness have mine eyes beheld. My heart hath indeed rejoiced. My prayer thou heardst, and grantedst its fulfilment: how shall I render thee meet thanks ? ”

And while he spoke, he walked on and out beyond the palace, beyond the gates down to where his army lay, streams of praise and flattery poured he forth, which the fine courtesy of the Rājput would not interrupt, nor could he show distrust who had asked his foe to risk his life.

Arrived amidst his men, Alā-u-dḍīn made quick sign that they hold the Rājput, and bind him fast.

“ See that ye guard him well,” he cried. Then turning to the stiff and haughty Chief, he hissed savagely: “ Thinkest thou I lose thus easily my quarry. Thou hast but whetted my desire. In one way alone canst thou thy freedom win—give me Padmāvaṭī and thou art free; refuse—then remember well these words of Alā-u-dḍīn; ” and more slowly and with brutal insolence came the final words: “ Padmāvaṭī shall be mine.” With swift scowl to the men he spake: “ Beware ! If this man escapes, hell-tortures will await ye.”

To the lady came the startling message: “ Yield

thyself to me. The Regent is in bonds, to be freed by thee alone, but the price is thy beautiful self—to be my Empress and reign with me.”

Sore was the sorrow that for brief space clouded the loveliness of Paḍmāvaṭī; deep and earnest the counsel she held with one faithful servant and one trusty minister, and to Alā-u-ḍḍīn the answer came :

“I am thine ; with my servants and my women to-day I come to thee. One thing I ask : A separate tent make ready, far from the others, and there will I meet thee. Tarry not ; I haste to come.”

The Paṭhān danced with keen delight and snapped his fingers in his glee ; and word he sent throughout the camp : “ Put aside all work, rejoice, right merrily prepare to greet the royal bride that to-day cometh to me.”

But beyond, in the grim fortress, Paḍmāvaṭī made ready with stern courage. Seven-hundred dolis ready stood, but within no gentle woman's face was hid : the flower of Rājput chiefs sat within the close drawn curtains. To carry them were warriors, two to each, Kahārs in outward seeming. Accompanied thus went forth Paḍmāvaṭī, and the strange procession moved down to the Muslim host, and surely never thus had army come to battle. Clear had been the orders, and

each doli stayed not till within the midst of that feasting camp it rested. To Alâ-u-ddîn came humble messenger: "Will the great Emperor grant but one prayer to Padmâvatî? That ere she meets him, she takes farewell of her Lord, alone."

And impatient Alâ-u-ddîn made answer: "Be it so; but haste."

Quickly the doli swung away to where the Rājput chafed in helpless anger and despair; swiftly to the tent she passed, and in low, eager whisper to the amazed Chief told all. Then, ere the astounded guards could stay them, they had dashed from the tent and flung themselves upon a horse that stood caparisoned near by, and, while those armed warriors, who had sprung from out their dolis, engaged the bewildered hosts, the twain fled safe and triumphant to the fortress.

And treacherous Alâ-u-ddîn in exquisite apparel watched eagerly for the coming of Padmâvatî, while his heart sang: "When I greet peerless Padmâvatî then will my heart be glad." He wondered to see a sudden commotion and a solitary horse with its double burden dash frantically up to the fortress gate. Then saw he the marvel of a warrior band spring from out those dolis, and work sore havoc among his men. He cursed his blindness and his folly, and rushed where the fighting was thickest. For two days a

bloody battle raged and many a noble chief lay dead on either side ; but the victory was with the Rājput lords. Angry and defeated, the Paṭhān Emperor withdrew to Delhi.

“Worsted by a woman,” was the hateful refrain that gave him peace nor day nor night. He thought he saw it on the lips of men ; he heard it in every mocking breeze that blew ; every rippling wave flung at him the taunting rhythm.

Again he gathered a vast army and set out to crush that haughty Rājput clan, and once more Chittor saw the countless thousands settle about her walls.

Upon that former awful field of carnage most of the Rājput chiefs had fallen, only a few remained ; and the Muslims seemed as numerous as the sands that thickly lie on Gangā's shore.

But they would fight for the honor of their Loṭus-Flower, yea, till the last drop of blood be shed. Useless to go at once out upon the plain, but closing fast the gates they fired down upon the swarms beneath and wrought great slaughter, until at last confusion reigned where the southern division lay ; then forth sallied the last of the brave warrior band, with wild and ringing cry, to the sure death that awaited them. Despite the Muslim thousands 'twas no child's play to meet

those furious Rājput few. But they fell one by one, and the last remnant gathered round their leader, with him to the last, fighting gloriously and knowing well that no lady of theirs would grace the Pathān Court.

For up therefore behind the walls rose the pall-like smoke to greet their dying eyes, which closed in grim satisfaction as they strewed that battle-field.

Padmāvatī, true Rājput woman and wife, gathering all her maids and all her womenkind, had cheered departing husbands, fathers, sons, to certain doom ; then behind the fast-barred gates of the palace had mounted a vast funeral pyre, and the bright red tongues of flame curled round the fair body of the lovely Lady for whose sake the fight had raged, and the Rājput clan lay slain. Loved Chittor stood, deserted.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SWEET SINGER OF RAJPUTANA.¹

In the old dominions of Mārwar was a small village—Meratā—where, to Raṭan Sinha of Meratā, grandson of Joḍha, Raṭore Ruler of Mārwar,² was born a daughter (S. 1573. A. D. 1517). Quiet and dreamy, the first words her sweet baby lips uttered were lisping praises of Shri Kṛishṇa. Later, as she played with dolls and toys about her, she made them serve as mūrtis of the Divine, and she sang in joyous melody of the love that was in her heart—rich harvest gathered after many births of deep, true devotion. The little one—Mīrābai—clever and of exceeding beauty, yet humble and graciously tender to one and all, grew to maidenhood with ever increasing devotion to her Lord. “The time is ripe for the maid to marry,” said her parents, and they sought her fitting husband. But when

¹ The date given to Mīrābai varies in the different chronicles, and on pp. 59, 60, she was spoken of, according to one history, as the wife of Kumbhā. But the account given by Munshi Devī Prasad, the careful historian of Mārwar, shews her to be the wife of Bhojrāj, son of Sāngā, who died before his father, and this account, as the most reliable, is followed here.

² See pp. 52, 56, 57.

to Mirâbai came word of their intent, straight to her mother she went, and with little tender hands humbly folded, entreated: "Mâtâjî, hear my prayer. Parameshvara has made men to worship and to serve Him. In Mâyâ though immersed, yet 'tis not for men to forget Him—the Supreme. Food, drink, and clothing seek those who marry. He is no longer their first thought. Therefore, beloved mother, plunge me not into the miseries of marriage."

"Child," the mother answered, "these are not fit words for the lips of maids. What know they of marriage? Thy parents will choose the best for thee; thou hast but to obey."

Big tears filled her dark shining eyes as Mirâbai turned away. "Alas," she thought, "who will understand that I long for the hard life of the devotee, with its many renunciations. I care nought for the delights that are showered upon the Queens of stately palaces. Nay, dear Lord, never will I forsake worship of Thee. Ever will I live utterly humble and utterly devoted to Thee. Let come what will, I vow to serve Thee ever, Thy servant, and not the idle Queen of any realm." Upon Kumâr Bhojrâj, son of Sângâ, Râṇâ of Mewâr, fell the choice; then all too soon followed the bewildering, gorgeous marriage pageants, and the new life in her husband's home.

But never had those splendid halls held Râṇī like this. The rich dainties she put aside and with her own hands prepared simple meals, of which she partook after due sacrifice. No luxury of softly cushioned, silken couch tempted her, but upon a deer skin, stretched on the bare floor, she slept. No palace revel was honored with her presence, but she gathered round her the sweet matrons and maids of that court, and tried to teach them meditation and worship. In her garden no fragrant golden champak, nor jasmine, nor queenly rose, poured out rich perfume; but only the sacred tulsī bush crowned each marble jar.

But the Prince's brow grew dark with displeasure, and he curtly told her that Râṇīs did not thus. "Kumârjī, 'twas all against my will that I was forced to wed thee. To Shrí Kṛishṇa my life I gave. To spend my days in His service did I vow; other duty have I none." And as she passed out from his presence her lovely voice floated back to him:

"What would'st thou that I do,

Lord of Mewār?

But to adore my God is all I ask.

If it doth not please thee, Lord of Mewār,

Fling me aside,

In kingly pride.

Rejected by my God, Lord of Mewâr,
Ah—then I die!"

As the days passed and still Mîrâbai showed no inclination to deviate from the rigid course she had marked out for herself, hot anger burned in the Prince's heart.

Oft when Mîrâbai worshipped in the temple, she would fall into deep trance, and when she arose from it such exquisite melodies poured from her lips that the people stood entranced, and always greater grew the crowd around the temple, hoping to catch some of that undying song.

To the Mughal Emperor reached the fame of that song, and he desired to hear it.¹ But how should he dare to visit the high-born Rājput Princess, and beg her sing for him? "It would lay deadliest insult on the proud Rānā, and make him a most relentless foe." Tān-Sen, clever musician of the court, whispered a way—to go in secret, wearing the humble yellow robes, and none would deny them entrance to the temple's sacred courts. They went. Gloriously poured forth the ravishing floods of purest song, and all radiant her exquisite face with the exstasy of her love. Far, far above all sordid dreams, all ruthless grasp of Empire, was borne the thought of

¹ This story is told of Akbar, but Akbar was only four years old when Mîrâbai died. See p. 139.

the royal listener upon that tide of deathless music. At her feet he humbly bent, and offered her a jewelled necklace. In surprise she viewed the handsome jewels; then said: "'Tis not for Sâdhus to possess such treasures. Hast thou obtained it fairly? Otherwise 'tis not fit offering." "Devîjî, the dark waters of swift Yamunâ yielded it up as I bathed. 'Tis but a poor bauble that I offer to thy God."

And Mîrâbai hung the glittering jewels upon the image of Shri Krishna. But willing tongues soon told the Prince of the splendid ornament that blazed there in the temple. He demanded that it be brought to him. One in the court had seen that self-same jewel sold to the Emperor; no threats could make him say otherwise. The Prince rested not till he learned how the Emperor had gone to the temple where his wife worshipped. Furious rage tore at his heart. "She is not fit for wife of mine, nor to be Mewâr's future Râjî." And he gave orders that she be slain. None stirred to obey; greater than all fear of him as Prince was the fear of laying sacrilegious hand upon a devotee. He banished her to a small house near the palace with scant attendance—but she went on serenely.

The Prince brooded long to discover some way to be rid of her. At last he sent a box, exquisitely wrought and with message; "Bhakṭa

indeed art thou, inflexible in thy chosen way. As offering is sent this jewel for thy throat." Surprised, Mīrābai opened the box, when from it outsprang an angry snake and struck her furiously. "Kumārjī," she calmly said: "I offer it to him I worship, as mālā of chandra beads;" and the horrid writhing thing she placed about her neck, and no harm was hers. Then sent the Prince a golden cup, superbly chased, brimming with deadliest poison: "This amṛita, drink it." Quietly she took the cup, quaffed its contents, and said: "Poison is but the power of God, the ambrosial waters that have touched His feet. A thousand times I thank thee, Prince." Harmless as purest water proved the poison; and a few days she waited other commands. Curt, cruel message came: "'Tis not meet for thee to live; destroy thyself." "I obey," she simply said.

At night, when only the soft stars twinkled greeting, she passed out from the palace gates in humblest robes. Straight to swiftly flowing Yamunā she passed and, offering herself in fullest sacrifice, she plunged into the cool waters. But there was other work for the devotee, and shining messenger was sent by Him she worshipped: "Mīrābai, thy obedience complete, thy duties to thy husband are over. But there is other work for thee to do. Mankind waits to hear that which

thou hast to teach of highest Love. Go thou and lift all men nearer God."

She rose from out the water and passed through field and village, singing as she went, and men and woman hastened to do her honor. Far across the land she wandered even unto Dvârakâ. And ever there would come strange rumors to the Prince, of one who wandered singing, and he knew that it must be his wife, and sent soldiers to slay her where'er she might be. When Mirâbai saw the men approach, she guessed their intent, and, entering the temple, there prostrate prayed: "O Lord, God of mercy, Protector of thy humble devotees, Lord of all worlds, Thou who art the Inner Self of all, Giver of life and death, of all joys and miseries, Remover of all fear. Hail! Behold I am before thee, suppliant. Protect Thou me. If it be Thy will, save me from mine enemies." The men approached to seize her, but they saw only a blazing, blinding, Light, and, as they fell prostrate in fear, a great voice thundered forth: "Go back, O impious ones, who dare to try to destroy the devotee of the Lord." They hastily departed for Mewâr, and men cried shame in their hearts upon the Prince, and many openly murmured against him.

Mirâbai came at last to holy Vrindâban, and the whole populace acclaimed her the Goddess of Kailâsa, come again to walk the earth with man.

There she abode, and her songs passed along on the lips of all. As the Prince went abroad, he heard praises of the wife he had cast away; he heard the melodies that had been caught from her lips; he saw his people hastening from his realm to touch the feet of the woman he had sought to destroy, whose kingdom was now greater grown than his, for it was the kingdom of men's hearts. His ministers besought him to bring back the glory of Mewâr, and his heart smote him ever more and more, as deeper and deeper grew his remorse for the things that he had done. Would she return, she who lived but for worship? Not as royal husband could he go and command her. Ah no! she was far greater than mere earthly Râñi. The yellow robe he donned, and made his way with difficulty to the temple whence flowed forth the rich glory of song.

"Give alms," he begged.

"A beggar woman has nought to give, save blessing."

"Nay, 'tis thou alone canst help me."

"In what way may I serve thee?"

"By forgiving me," he cried, and removed his disguise.

There was no room for bitterness in the great heart of Mîrâbai, and very tenderly she welcomed him. Back with him she returned to Mewâr, no

longer the despised devotee, but the crowning glory of Mewâr. Many years she lived in sweet humility, untiring in her deeds of love and mercy, and in S. 1608 (A. D. 1547) she passed away, her husband dying before his father Sângâ. And men reverence her name unto this day.



नमोऽस्तुते

CHAPTER VII.

THE STAR OF THE RAJPUTS.

Rao Surasena had possessed a wide dominion. But in those warring days no man kept whole his realm who could not resist all covetous attacks. The greed of realm came upon Alâ-ud-dîn of Delhi, and much of those fair lands fell beneath his sway. Then when Surasena's army was weary from hard battle and discouraged by defeat, the Afghân Lailâ swept down upon Thoda and after bitter struggle drove the Rājput from it, and the Muslim flag waved triumphant upon the walls. To Bijnor went Surasena, ruled then by Rājā Rāemal of Mewār, and there he shut himself up in sorrow, and waited that time when he should be strong enough to go forth and win back his territory.

One fair daughter had Surasena—Tārābai, who, young though she was, hated passionately that even the smallest fragment of her father's domains should bend to the Muslim rule. Long and bitterly she grieved because her father, whom she deeply loved, sorrowed over his losses, and her eager young spirit planned a thousand ways

by which he might once more rule absolute monarch. "If I were but a boy," she often moaned, "I should wield sword and shield to right good purpose." And in the midst of her bitter musings there came at last one flashing thought. "Why should I not train as would my father's son? Rājput women have led the battle oft of old; why not I again?"

From that moment no time was wasted; disdainfully she put aside the pretty, glittering tissues, all softly woven, and the flashing jewels, with which young maids bedeck fair limbs; make the luscious sweets and feast she would not, but in the grim sports that make men hard of muscle and keen of eye she delighted. She learnt all things of which the ancient Shāstravidyā teaches, and with utmost gravity discussed with well-tried warriors the methods of war, and how to meet the Muslim hosts that held Thoda in thrall. Fearlessly she rode, even the fiery untamed steeds fresh from the desert wilds; none amongst her father's horsemen was more daring rider than she, and none more quick to slice the lemon upon the ground with clean, accurate stroke, as she galloped past, bending low from her seat, then swinging back to it again as on she went.

At last arrived a time when Rao Surasena deemed himself strong enough to advance upon

Thoda. He made his little army ready and marched out from Bijnor with Tārā by his side in prince's guise. She cheered him with her dauntless courage, urged him to stay not his hand till Afghān face was seen no more within his realm, stirred him to keener hatred of the foe, while she longed for the tumult of the strife. But the strength of the Afghān was too great; not for Tārā to taste this time the sweets of victory, and the little army went back to Bijnor defeated and disheartened—except Tārābai, who spoke no word, but who with tightened lips, and hard bright eyes, sat proudly erect upon her fine charger, vowing yet more terrible vengeance in her heart, determined to set keen wits to work upon some plan to oust the foe.

The beauty of Tārābai, her splendid strength, and courage, her knowledge of the Shāstravidyā,* had spread afar to many Kings, and Rājput lords asked her hand in marriage, sending courteous message and rich gifts. Her father turned to Tārābai for answer, and to all but one reply she gave: "To him alone my hand is given who shall restore my father's lands."

But none was found who cared to embroil himself with the Muslim Chiefs, who would bring countless hordes to sweep destructively over their possessions. At last Rāṇā Rāemal's son, Jaimal, gave full, false promise that he would do her

will, and, when she heard, the splendid eyes of Tārā blazed with the joy of the triumph that would be hers. Right gladly and impatiently would she be wedded and get to the fray. Rao Surasena, in his joy and in his faith in a Rājput's word, sent word to Jaimal that he might come to Bijnor and see fair Tārābai, and Jaimal came. But the falsity in his heart rose upon his lips to fling at her mad, foul words of insult. Near by stood Surasena, sad and proud, who, when those wild words fell upon his ear, in furious anger drew swift sword, and Jaimal lay stretched a corpse at the feet of Tārābai.

Consternation reigned at first throughout the Rājput courts, but when upon Rāemal was urged the punishment of his son's slayer he answered: "False pledge and foul insult should no true Rājput give. Meet then his death, and henceforth his slayer shall rule in Bijnor."

Prithvirāj, second son of Rāemal, lover of wild adventure, reckless and free, heard of his brother's fate, heard of the vow Tārā had sworn, and to tilt against the Afghān chief in Thoda was a prospect that pleased him well. At once to Bijnor he came and asked instant audience of her father. He too was brought before Tārābai, and her straight keen glance was upon him as she asked of him likewise: "Wilt thou drive

the Afghân from Thoda and restore it to my father ? ”

Steadily came the reply : “ I will restore it ; I swear it upon the faith of a Rājput.” And hastily they wedded, that preparations for war might go more quickly on.

Well skilled indeed was Prīṭhvi in all battle lore ; therefore chose he for time of attack that hour in the Mohurruṃ days when all the Muslim world mourns the untimely death of Hasan and Husain at Kerbela, and, unarmed, presses around the Tāziyā, to render homage to those early martyrs. Prīṭhvi, taking with him Tārā in man’s guise, arrived before Thoda at that moment when the Musalmāns were bowed before the tombs, all wearied with long fast and strong emotions. Leaving their army where none was, beyond the walls, Prīṭhvi, Tārā, and one other trusty comrade joined the pilgrim throng as it swayed around the tomb, preparatory to forming the long procession from the great central square. Near by upon one of the balconies stood the Afghân lord, making ready to join the crowd below ; and turning to those near said : “ I see three strangers in the crowd ; whence come they ? ”

“ Where, O Chief ? ” asked an officer near. “ There, beside the bier. Who are they ? ” A flying arrow and a long keen lance made answer

with unerring aim, and Lailâ fell lifeless in his black robes of mourning. The crowd ceased their wild, wailing cries; ceased to flagellate bare bleeding back with jagged chains; ceased to beat already darkly bruised breast with tight shut fist.

An instant they stood aghast; then wild shrieks rent the air, and fearful was the confusion as some strove to flee, and others strove to reach the three who fought their way through the turmoil. They reached the gate—a huge elephant blocked the way, while from behind sticks and stones rained thick and fast—small mercy if the crowd once seized them. “Strike at its trunk,” shouted Prithvirâj, and with swift whirling slash Târâ’s sword bit deep, and the great brute, screaming savagely, charged through the crowd, trampling them in his rage.

Out of the gates fled the three; after them poured a frantic throng straight upon the waiting Râjput force, drawn up in sturdy battle array. And the Râjputs routed utterly those panic-stricken Muslims, who fled, some with streaming turbans whereby the Râjputs deftly hauled them back, shoes dropped from fleeting feet, and some tripping over the hastily snatched-up weapon, to fall easy prey to Râjput sword. Thodâ was won. Then, making gay the city, did happy-hearted Târâ send fine escort for her beloved father, and his freed subjects welcomed him with glad shout.

Once more the flag of Surasena floated splendidly over Thoda's wall in place of the Crescent. Great indeed was his gratitude to brave Târâ, and to her warrior husband who had fulfilled her vow.

Not unavenged should go the Muslim disgrace, and the Muhammaḍan lord of Ajmere prepared to punish Pṛithvirâj. But Pṛithvirâj marched quickly out from Thoda with Târâ by his side, and surprised the enemy and defeated him utterly, and Ajmere was his. Râṇâ Râemal, old and lonely, desired his son's return, but Pṛithvi, though glad to be friends and at peace, must be free to do as he willed. To the hill fortress of Komulmer he took his warlike Queen, and there raised up a splendid home. Strong massive outer walls, well guarded with myriad towers and battlements; behind them lived in peace the citizens, fearing no sudden foe; and above rose the hill whereon was no point left unprotected, right up to the summit, where, crown of all, was the "cloud-palace" within whose wall dwelt Pṛithvirâj with Târâ for many years, strong, roughly just, unsparing foe but trusty friend; he led his men on many an expedition and Târâ with him oft, and Râjputs loved to serve beneath his victorious banner.

There came a messenger one day from the sister of Pṛithvi, she who had wed the Prince of Sirohi, in whom no princely blood seemed to flow.

Opium he drank beyond the rightful share. And it drove kindness and courtesy from his mind, and left but rough coarseness there instead, and his wife he shamefully treated, till her Rājput blood boiled at the constant insult and she sent word :

“O Brother Pṛithvi, save me from this man ; take me hence to my father’s home. Shamed will I be no more.” “I come,” briefly made Pṛithvi answer.

One night the Prince lay in drunken stupor upon his bed ; upon the floor his wife, in despairing shame. Lo ! Pṛithvirāj stood by the bed, with ready dagger at the Prince’s throat.

“Slay him not,” she entreated, for her heart failed her when she thought of the cruel flames that await all loyal Rājput widows. And Pṛithvi stayed his hand, but he commanded : “Bend to thy wife’s feet,” and when that complete : “Now place her shoes upon thy head.” And the Prince of Sirohi did in fear this most humiliating of all deeds. Then Pṛithvi stayed some days as guest, and right friendly was the parting of the Princes. Sirohi was famous for its sweetmeats, and some the Prince gave to Pṛithvi as parting gift. When upon the way hunger assailed him ; he ate of the sweets and went onwards to Komulmer, where Tārā awaited him. But dread pains seized him,

he grew faint, and he knew that poison had flavored those luscious sweets. Upon the mountain whence he could look upon his splendid home, he halted.

“Send to the Râpi Târâbai and say the Prince greets her. He is ill and bids her haste.” And he lay dying, looking with longing down to the palace. Târâbai came hastily; upon the swiftest charger she flung herself and longed that it could fly. But swift as had been her coming, the poison had done its work yet more swiftly, and it was but a lifeless body that she found. And Târâ’s great heart broke, but she, the warrior-Queen would not weep, she would not mourn, nay, she would go to join her lord.

“Raise high the pyre,” she commanded the stricken warriors who clustered round their beloved master, they who had followed the Prince and his wife in many a fray. And they did as she commanded, and raised the great pyre whereon she mounted, and by her lord’s side went with him to the realms beyond Death’s portal.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

The small village of Sârangpur clustered beneath the great shady pîpal and mango trees beside the river Kâlî. In one of the quiet homes there Rûpamañi was born of Vaishya parents. It was not beauty that spread the name of Rûpamañi abroad as she grew to maidenhood, though she was fair indeed and gracious and tender, but because of her ravishing voice she was known across the land. More and more profound became her knowledge of music, more full and mellow her voice, till few were counted more accomplished in the ancient science of song than she.

Bâz-Bahâdur, strong Pathân warrior and perfect musician, had wrested Mâlva from its rightful sovereign and had proclaimed himself master.

When the fierce battle, or the exciting chase, or the wearying kingly duties were over, Bâz-Bahâdur would take the deep-toned instruments and remain absorbed for hours, compelling from them entrancing melodies; and many a dreamy starry night he spent weaving delicious song and verse.

Perchance it was that the fame of Rûpamañi reached his ears, perchance it was for other reason of which history tells not—but howe'er it came, Rûpamañi and none other he chose for wife. One in passionate love of music, one in every hope and aim, they lived ideally in uttermost harmony.

Such his adoration for Rûpamañi that Bâz-Bahâdur held her lightest wish as law ; such the wisdom of Rûpamañi that never foolish wish, nor hasty word, marred her husband's work. Hers the clearest, purest diamonds, hers the reddest, richest rubies, hers the most lustrous pearls, hers the most cunningly wrought jewels, hers the most exquisite fabrics wherewith to robe her gracious form. Gardens so lovely that they seemed a dreamland of rarest beauty surrounded her ; she moved in stately halls of marble sculptured to perfection.

But, slowly, slowly, Rûpamañi forgot that a King must be ever alert and keen to rule his kingdom ; that he must have quick ear to hear the rumors far and near ; that he must be tireless protector of all within his realm. More and more she kept Bâz-Bahâdur with her, arranging melodies for her lovely voice, or blending on various instruments the haunting music that has come down along the ages with the stream of Hindu life.

The King cared less and less for irksome duties. What mattered it if pens and paper were not ready to set forth the important injunction ? it gave time for one more song while the servants brought them, and oft it was many hours ere again he remembered that his ministers awaited him, and then the hour had passed wherein the remedy was sorely needed, and the kingdom was one step nearer ruin. What mattered it if some high ambassador, charged with weighty proposals went slighted away, if yet one more ravishing melody was called into existence ? Who cared that the oppressed gathered with petitions in the great Durbar Hall, where dust lay thick upon the King's seat, and that they went mournfully away to murmur against the negligence of their ruler, if but the sitar, the tabala, the vînâ, stood ever ready, brightly polished and in perfect tune ?

A good and faithful Dewân held as best he could the kingdom's helm ; he managed well enough ; why then should not the King be free to pour out the floods of glorious sound ?

And seven years passed thus. Afar, in the heart of the Mughal Empire, at Delhi, came spies to whisper of a realm ripe for plucking by any daring warrior ; a realm where the King loved but music ; where a clever Dewân was yet not clever enough to rule the land as it should be

ruled ; where the army was lax because none saw to its discipline.

Âdam-Khân, ambitious, dark-browed Sirdar in Akbar's service, begged an army to fall secretly upon the unsuspecting Ruler of Mâlva. And Akbar gave him an army to do as he would.

One day Bâz-Bahâdur sat beside his Queen, revelling in his music ; a wild commotion was heard without, shrill terrified voices calling upon the King for help ; nearer and nearer came the rushing steps and the frantic voices, till at last panic-stricken ministers and servants broke in upon their peace, crying wildly : " O King, save us ! the enemy, the enemy, he is slaughtering in the streets ! " and they cowered low, shrieking in fear.

And Bâz-Bahâdur went out with the rich cry of Rûpamañî ringing in his ears : " Victory to thee, my Lord."

Swiftly he donned his armor and called his troops together, and amazed he was to find them but few and disorderly. And yet he cared but little, for his was no longer the warrior's heart. It was as though the music that he loved had woven a spell about him, and sapped away the fierce power to fight and conquer. He fought but poorly, with no power to make his men do and dare. His army was scattered and slain, and

he fled to the jungle, and none heard of him again for many a day.

In the palace was silence, where Rûpamañi sat waiting to greet her victorious Lord. But she shivered with dread when she heard the clank of heavy and unfamiliar steps that stayed at her door. The curtain was drawn apart to reveal a tall, strong, mailed man, with stains of battle upon him. Rûpamañi stood amazed, gazing wildly at the fierce, proud Âdam-Khân; and he laughed grimly at her fear and spoke harshly: "Afraid art thou? But I am well pleased with thee. Thy husband hath fled. To-night thou wilt be my bride."

No word came from the terrified Rûpamañi, but when again the curtain had blotted out that awful form she fell prostrate on the floor.

"Dear husband," she wailed, "why hast thou gone? To none but thee will I say 'Lord.' Why hast thou abandoned me to this dire fate? Thy wife am I, faithful unto death. If thou hast gone to the regions of Yama, then I follow thee. If thou art living, then never, no, never, shall the shame of being another's be my curse."

For long she lay moaning in deepest agony. At last a sudden thought made her rise, dry-eyed, determined—and glad.

"Dear Lord, I come," she murmured as she passed to her room.

The day was well-nigh spent, and ere long Âdam-Khân would come to greet his bride. Yea, she would be ready to meet him as a Queen should.

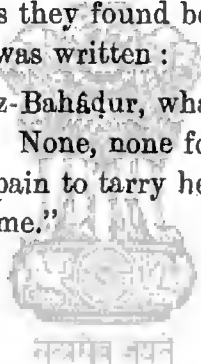
"Haste ye," she cried to the maids, "deck me right gloriously. I would appear beauteous in the eyes of my Lord this night."

The frightened maids robed her in every splendor; and they made yet more brilliant the perfect bower where halcyon days had sped. Fragrant flowers made sweet the air; cool fountains plashed in the corners, spraying scented waters; upon the wide couch were spread gorgeous fabrics rich with gold and pearls, and upon it lay fair stately Rûpamañi, across her face a thin, lightly spangled veil of gauze to enhance her fairness, and down upon it all the colored lamps shed soft, rosy light. Ere long came Âdam-Khân, no longer the mailed warrior, but richly robed to greet his bride, and his heart leapt for joy at the splendid scene that met his eyes; and he heard not the sob of the faithful maid, who was watching beside that door, as he let fall the heavy curtain behind him.

Across to the couch he went and gazed down upon Rûpamañi, and saw with quickened heart

the happy smile that curved her lips—but how curiously still she was. “Dear lovely one,” breathed Âdam-Khân, and he touched the little jewelled hand that lay upon that bright coverlet. But it was cold—so cold! With a wild cry he placed his hand upon her heart, but found no warm throbbing life. Horrified he staggered from the room, and Rûpamatî slept on—faithful unto death. The poison had done well its deadly work. Afterwards they found beneath her pillow a paper whereon was written :

“Reft of Bâz-Bahâdur, what joy for thee, O broken heart? None, none for thee in all this world. 'Tis but pain to tarry here alone; therefore, I come, I come.”



CHAPTER IX.

A WARRIOR QUEEN.

When King Ibrâhim Adil Shâh ruled over Bijapur, it was a magnificent city with the mighty fort for its central point. Exquisite palaces, stately mansions, wide-spaced markets, great-domed mosques, chaste temples, splendid parks, spacious public buildings, and busy bazars, all lay beyond those massive walls.

Famous Chând Bibi it was who raised Bijapur to its greatest heights of power. A Princess of Ahmednagar, she had married Ali Adil Shâh of Bijapur, to cement the alliance between Ahmednagar and Bijapur, to make common cause against the Hindu power of Southern India. A great battle decided the supremacy of Muslim rule, and many a petty State fell to the share of Bijapur. Chând Bibi went among these conquered States, winning the Princesses from their proud resentment by her gracious tenderness.

Very beautiful was Queen Chând; slight of frame yet of perfect contour, and instinct with regal dignity; very regular her features, with eyes large, soft and brown, shaded by thick dark

lashes, above them delicately arched brows; her sweet mouth showed every curve full of decision, her chin was full, firm and round, and the broad forehead revealed unusual power. A light veil was always across her face, but did not hide her glowing, queenly beauty. A perfect rider, she was ever at her husband's side as he marched to war or went a-hunting. She became expert in the deadly arts of war, and in following the swift falcon's flight as it dashed after its prey. With ease she spoke Arabic, Persian, Turki, the dialects that the soldiers used, and also Kanarese and Marâthî. Leisure hours she spent in painting flowers, or in playing with skilled fingers upon the vînâ, or singing dainty Persian songs and Hîndû ballads. The undivided love of her husband was hers; only one thing marred her perfect happiness—she had no son.

In A. D. 1580 Ali Adil Shâh died, leaving her a widow of twenty-five. He named his little nephew, Ibrahim Adil Shah, to rule after him, with Chând Bibî as Queen Regent and his guardian.

Stormy indeed were those first years of her rule. Her ministers were not loyal enough to be proof against the temptations that beset their high office. Once she was ignominiously forced from her palace and away to the fortress of Sattara by Keshwar Khân, who then attempted to

appease the people with feast and pageant; but they reviled him, and he fled to find death at the hand of an avenger for a foul crime instigated by himself. Then came to power Eklas Khân, an Abyssinian, violent and factious, whose party quarrelled savagely with other factions. But he led the troops bravely and faithfully against the many foes who came against Bîjapur, which they deemed easy prey because of her internal strife. And in the midst of the battle the Queen was everywhere, directing and encouraging. The enemy succeeded in breaching the wall and torrents of rain made the breach wider; but the Queen stood in the raging storm, encouraging the men, till the wall was repaired. The siege was raised, all parties acknowledged the Queen, and peace followed for a time. Ere long a jealous hand struck Eklas Khân blind with cruel dagger strokes, and usurped his power, depriving the Queen also of authority, but Bîjapur soon settled down again, and prospered.

When young Ibrahim Adil Shâh had grown old enough to take most of the responsibility of the State upon himself, Chând Bibî went to Ahmednagar, but warring factions and constant atrocities gave her no chance to help the kingdom, and she returned to Bîjapur, where the people and the King welcomed her enthusiastically. There she lived in peace while the young

King ruled, taking charge of affairs only when he was on tour through his dominions, or in the field against the foe. Generous, talented, a political genius, yet frank and charitable, she wielded power with perfect tact.

Since the marriage of Chând Bibi, affairs in Ahmednagar had grown worse and worse. The King had fallen in battle, and powerful factions endeavored to place upon the throne the heir each most fancied; the Dekkani party crowned a child of pretended royal birth, while the late King's infant son was upheld by the others.

Furiously they quarrelled, and at last the supporters of the true heir appealed to Queen Chând to assist them.

"So great thy wisdom, noble Queen," they urged, "that surely peace will smile upon Ahmednagar once more if thou wilt but come."

Afar loomed a still greater crisis, for the Delhi Emperor, Akbar, was ever keen to turn to advantage the internecine quarrels that were the doom of many a State. Prince Murâd was already hovering about the Dekkan with a vast army, awaiting the first chance to invade the country. The unwise, rash Dekkani leader had already invoked the aid of Murâd to uphold the claims of the boy he supported, and Murâd eagerly made ready to accede. How bitter the leader's regret,

when he found the boy had no rightful claim—but Murâd could not be stayed. And all this Queen Chând was asked to meet. "It is my duty, and the will of Allah; I will do it." With her went faithful Abbas Khân, her adopted son, and his lovely wife, Zora.

All Ahmednagar welcomed her joyously, and she gave them deep comfort and hope with her wise counsels, and charmed them with her grace and dignity. The Dekkani leader had fled, but wrote expressing his sorrow at his mistake, and saying he would not come again unless with troops to help her.

From Bijapur and from Golconda came armies who undertook to guard the hills that lay northwards of Ahmednagar. The real Prince was declared of pure descent, and crowned amidst the glad acclaim of the people.

But the treacherous Governor of the fort sent to Prince Murâd: "Royal Prince, haste thy march. An infamous woman holds the realm, supporting a child upon the throne, who is of hidden birth." But his treason was discovered, and promptly he suffered death.

Then to Murâd wrote the Queen: "Prince, the past thou knowest. The Dekkani leader has recanted. As powerful noble, as son of the great Emperor, we would welcome thee. If, still,

thou comest hostile, and wilt not be conciliated, then I warn thee that I am well supported and will repel thee."

No heed took Murâd, and the Queen prepared for the inevitable struggle.

He determined to strike at once, ere the Dekkani troops had time to bring assistance to Ahmednagar.

In this supreme moment the leaders of factions put aside their quarrels and supported the Queen, who calmly made every preparation, taking the greatest care to have the granaries well filled. Day after day she went round with Abbas Khân, inspecting all the preparations. Again and again she besought the Bijapur troops to advance more quickly. From Nildroog, 12,000 cavalry were tardily sent, only to be intercepted by the Mughals, and defeated, and the way to Ahmednagar lay open, right up to the very fort itself.

The Queen felt that no outside aid could now be hoped for. Steadily the Mughal army advanced till it reached the fort, and invested it on the north, west and south. Nearer and nearer they pushed, mining and trenching, and placing the terrible breaching batteries. It was not untouchable that they approached, for the Arab marksmen with deadly aim laid many low. Everything that

went on within Ahmednagar the Queen personally directed. She countermined and rendered useless every plan that the Mughals tried. And the Prince Murād grew anxious, for famine was threatening them, and the fort seemed absolutely impregnable.

One night as Chānd Bibī stood with others upon the ramparts, a voice cried through the darkness from across the ditch: "Surrender, brave Queen, and save blood-shed. Five mines laid ready will shatter thy walls, yea, even where thou standest. Inevitable is thy defeat." The people, afraid, were ready to yield to the mysterious warning. But the Queen's silvery voice rang out: "Shall we surrender, and yield wives and daughters to Mughal violence? Though but a woman, yet will I not leave this place with my life. Allah will help me to avert this evil. My weak fingers will tear the earth from these mines and destroy this danger." "We will not desert thee, O mother," shouted the people. "We will die if Allah wills it, but we yield not."

Pickaxe in hand, the Queen led the quickly organised gangs to the shafts, and there the men worked desperately, while she passed from shaft to shaft with cool water and sherbet for the straining toilers. Ere dawn reddened the eastern sky three mines lay bared and useless, when a loud crash told of an undiscovered one, and a

small breach was rent in the rampart of the fort. To the breach the Queen urged her men to fight for life and honor. She donned her light armor; across her radiant, beautiful face waved a light veil, and flourishing her bare sword she raised the thrilling battle-cry, and pressed on to the breach. "Who will follow my veil?" she cried. "To honor, to death, it will lead you, but never to dishonor and shame."

Passionately the people pressed about her, fired by her words and vowing to fight while life lasted, and to follow their glorious leader in the "Battle of the Veil." The day passed on to noon, and the besiegers hesitated to attempt the breach so well guarded, and too narrow to allow of an overwhelming rush.

At last a daring few bore towards the wall, and great crowds poured after them, and soon the trenches were crowded. The great guns on the fort sent screaming forth a shower of round shot and copper pieces, and hundreds lay writhing. Wave after wave of men came pouring over the trenches finding hot death from that awful hail from the great guns, and the Mughal leaders, not knowing the slaughter, and even thinking the breach had been won, urged them on, to make greater confusion. For hours went on the battle, with ever terrible loss to the foe. Sometimes a

few would scale the breach, only to meet death from the eager swords above. In the most dangerous places, where difficulty was greatest, fluttered the Queen's veil. To victory she urged them, and they fought as though inspired. As night fell, the disappointed Mughal troops reluctantly withdrew, pursued by the fearful shots from the guns. When Abbas Khân returned from his place at the breach he found that the Queen and his wife Zora, her companion through all that dread day, were weeping tears of joy in each other's arms.

An ambassador, sent on other business, went next morn to the Prince Murâd. By him the Prince sent message to the Queen: "We will leave Ahmednagar, if Queen Chând promise us unmolested retreat and cede us Berar, which is of no use to Ahmednagar." After seeing whether the fort could hold against another attack, if the ministers refused, Queen Chând put the proposal before the Durbar. They decided to cede Berar, and the Mughal army withdrew.

Ahmednagar was at peace, but only temporarily. Ministers, inflated by the power they wielded, attempted to aggrandise themselves, and party quarrels once again began. The Emperor, hearing of it, sent Prince Danyâl and Khân Khânân to try once more for supremacy in the Dekkan,

and the Queen with heavy heart prepared to meet them. Her army was much reduced, and the possibility of successful resistance much less than formerly. But, though less vigorous than of old, yet she made every preparation in her power to resist the Imperial forces.

Hamîd Khân was in charge of the garrison. He was a eunuch, whom the Queen had always treated generously, whom she had had educated, and who had always been in her service. He had shown himself an able soldier in the last siege, and was now in a place of trust and authority. Hamîd Khân hated Abbas Khân. He was jealous of him and ready to do harm if opportunity should arise, and he had begun to hate the Queen, for not giving the supreme command into his own hands. He brooded over ways to clear the throne of her influence, and grasp it for himself. The Queen, little dreaming of the blackness of his heart, trusted him fully in all matters.

Meanwhile the Mughal army had crept up to the walls. One night as Hamîd Khân sallied out under cover of darkness, with a small and daring party to harass the foe, he was caught by Osman Beg. This Osman Beg had tried by every foul means to capture Zora, wife of Abbas Khân. As a last desperate resolve he had offered his

services to the Mughal, hoping thereby to effect entrance into Ahmednagar and snatch Zora for himself. The two recognised each other, and their evil hearts concocted a plan of mutual assistance. Hamid Khân promised to deliver the fort into the hands of Osman Beg. Then he pretended to dash back for his life into the fort.

Again and again Abbas Khân had implored Queen Chand to leave Ahmednagar, but she refused to do so with fatal persistency. The garrison vehemently declared that it would hold out to the last, if only she would lead them as she did before in the famous "Battle of the Veil."

At last a plan came to her mind which perhaps would save her people and prevent warfare. She called Hamid Khân to her.

"Are my people ready to fight?" She asked.

"Yea," answered Hamid Khân, "they will go to victory or death with thee, if thou wilt but lead them as of old."

"Alas," sadly said the Queen, "'twas different then. Many have become traitors—how few I can trust."

And Hamid Khân flushed hotly, fearing his own treachery had been discovered. But the Queen went on: "I propose here in this draft to

ask the Mughal Prince to let my people pass out free, and surrender the fort and save bloodshed. If we fight we must inevitably lose. Give me your advice, for I do this thing to save my people, and surely even my enemies will not accuse me of other motives." Hamîd Khân took the draft, and pretending to hear a noise without, he rushed from the palace to where the soldiers were practising on the plain. Flinging his turban down, and scattering dust in the air he cried : " Brothers, Brothers, ye are betrayed ! Queen Chând means to surrender the fort. Dîn ! Dîn ! Let her die ! follow me ! "

Furiously, the soldiers shouted : " Treachery ! show us the way. Let us cut the Queen to pieces," and they raced after Hamîd Khân to the palace. There the Queen sat, uneasy at the approaching tumult, and thinking it the enemy who had won entrance. She saw the furious crowd dash towards her, and she stood erect, calm and puzzled. Some of the infuriated men hesitated, when they saw their beloved Queen, but Hamîd Khân with savage oaths rushed upon her, slashing furiously at her with his sword. She fell desperately wounded, but alive. Zora, rushing in at the tumult, knelt beside her and raised the lovely, noble head of the stricken Queen. She held water to the dying lips, but Queen Chând, with a glorious smile of tender love, put it

aside, gasping: "The angel calls. Lord ! I come. This as Allah wills." Sobbingly the Belief came from her lips, and with a deep sigh the great, pure soul of Queen Chând departed.

The minions of Osman Beg rushed in and tore Zora from the dead Queen's side, taking her away bound and gagged. Abbas Khân was returning from one of the mines when a man rushed towards him crying in horror: "Queen Chând has been attacked."

To the palace flew Abbas Khân, and there saw a bier covered with a black pall being carried along, and the cruel face of Osman Beg confronting him. Swiftly his dagger found the heart of Osman Beg, and he sank dead. Soon he discovered Zora and set her free.

"Who did this awful deed ? " he shouted in frenzy.

"Hamîd Khân, he did it, he struck her," answered many voices.

They sought him, found him hiding, and with small mercy flung a noose about his neck, and left him to die in slow agony hanging on the nearest tree.

Superbly beautiful in death lay Queen Chând, and passionate sorrow filled the people for their loss. In the little private cemetery they buried her body, and the fort soon fell into Mughal

hands.

Abbas Khân and his wife Zora went free to Bijapur. The little prince went into exile with all the Royal family, and in a few generations his line became extinct.



CHAPTER X.

A GREAT RULER.

Among the great Indian rulers of the past Ahalya Bai stands out as one of the greatest and best.

She was born in 1735, in the village Pâthardi in Mâlwa. She was the only daughter of Anandrao Shinde, who was a cultivator of the Dhargar caste, in the Pâthardi village. He and his wife had no children for many years, and were at last told by a Sâdhû, who also gave the wife some anjarâ, to go to Kolhapur, and there worship Shrî Jagadambâ. Ahalya's parents readily embraced the Sâdhû's advice, went to Kolhapur, and worshipped the Devi for about a year with the utmost devotion; at the end of that time the Devi appeared one night to Anandrao, in a dream, and said: "Child, I am highly pleased with the devotion with which thou hast adored me for one year past; thou mayest now go home; I shall fulfil thy desire by taking birth, myself personally, in thy house." So saying, Shrî Jagadambâ disappeared. The wife also had an almost simultaneous dream, in which a Suvâsini appeared before

her with a little girl babe in her arms. "She applied kunkûm to my forehead and disappeared, leaving the girl in my lap."

The happy couple cheerfully returned home, where in course of time Anandrao's wife gave birth to Ahalya. In preparing the horoscope, the astrologer foretold that the girl would become the wife of a Râjâ, would rule as a Queen, and that her unparalleled reputation would spread throughout India.

The child Ahalya grew up learned in the vast knowledge stored in the ancient Hindu books. She was not beautiful, but the sweetness of her face and the dignity of the bearing impressed all who saw her, and she had a marvellous power of winning people's hearts and keeping them loyal and true to her.

When Ahalya was 9 years of age her father grew anxious about her marriage, and as he saw no chance of the astrologer's prediction being realised, he wandered from place to place to find a suitable match for his daughter, but in vain. At last he grew tired, and returned home disappointed, leaving everything to destiny.

By this time Raghunâth Rao, alias Raghoba, Dada Peshwâ, and Malhar Rao Holkar, who were waging war with their enemies in Upper India, moved their armies homewards, on the

completion of their campaign, after gaining victory and restoring order there. While thus returning, they halted at Pâthardi village, on their way to Poonâ. Shri Mâruti's Temple, in front of Anand Rao's house, was the halting place of the Peshwâs, whenever they had occasion to pass through that village on their military expeditions. Raghoba Daâ accordingly stopped here, as usual, with all his retinue, and here Malhar Rao happened to see Ahalya Bai, who had accidentally come there. Impressed by her graceful appearance and dignified bearing, all the company at once took a fancy to her and enquired who she was. Her old schoolmaster, who was sitting next to the Peshwâ, related everything about her. Malhar Rao was much pleased, and considered her to be the only suitable bride for his son Khande Rao, who was also present there. He expressed his desire to the Peshwâ, and it received the latter's approbation. The betrothal ceremony was soon performed, and the marriage was celebrated at Poonâ a month later, with great magnificence.

The days passed swiftly for Ahalya Bai, in devoted service to the mother and father of her husband. Fierce had grown the heart of Malhar Rao in the many battles he had waged, and at times, when his wrath was roused, his bravest soldiers shrank afraid, but the utter gentleness of

Ahalya Bai won him back to milder moods. Proud and impatient was her mother-in-law, Goṭamā, but Ahalya Bai tenderly smoothed away the stormy frowns and brought peace to the fiery woman.

Exceedingly well versed in all a housewife's lore, Ahalya Bai ordered wisely the great palace, cheerfully charming away the petty jealousies, rendering harmless the many intrigues that arose. Afraid of committing even the smallest sin, she endeavored to her utmost to do always that which was right. Daily she pondered over the Purāṇas, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and strove to live according to the highest ideals she found in them.

In 1754 Khaṇḍe Rao went out to punish the troublesome Jāts for some deed of evil. He was killed in the struggle, leaving Ahalya Bai with one boy, Mālī Rao, and one girl, Machchhā Bai, who married Jaswant Rao. Sore indeed was the grief of Ahalya Bai, and it seemed as though she would follow her husband to the other world. Stern Malhar Rao, with unaccustomed tears filling his eyes, begged her: "Child, be not overcome by grief: Khaṇḍe Rao has gone, leaving me old and sonless. Thou alone canst assuage my grief. Child, seeing thee, I live. If thou, too, goest, leaving me desolate, then life must

end for me also. Little one, whom I love, check thy sorrow ; all this kingdom, and all its wealth are thine ; ask what thou wilt, and I will give it thee."

All the work that had been done by Khande Rao gradually fell to Ahalya Bai. Malhar Rao was oft away, warring with unabated energy, and who was more wise and trustworthy than Ahalya Bai ? She saw that accounts were kept in order, that expenditure was controlled, that attention was paid to the important matters of the State, that the needs of Malhar Rao were kept well supplied. Thus was Ahalya Bai prepared for the great part she was to play in later life.

And Malhar Rao went far afield, seeking to build an Empire. Gujerât, Lahore and Mûltân bent beneath his rule ; he reached out to Delhi, and plucked Ahamad Shâh from his throne and set Alamgir thereon. He died, while on his way home from a military expedition, and at his death Mâlî Rao was put upon the gadî of Indore ; but, alas for all hopes, he died nine months afterwards. It was well, perhaps, for he was strangely unlike his mother. Perversity, cruel and persistent perversity, had marred his whole life. It was as though some evil spirit obsessed him, and drove him to the atrocities that he inflicted on all about him. Ahalya Bai

knew of none that could occupy worthily the vacant throne ; so, putting aside her grief, she determined to do all in her power to fill it wisely and peacefully.

Now Gangâdhâr Jaswant, a strong and crafty minister, had hoped to see some babe upon the throne and himself chosen as regent ; and it pleased him not that Ahalya Bai should rule, for he knew she was wise and good, and would not yield to his ambitious and unscrupulous plans. And, perchance, a dream lurked in his mind of being one day Indore's ruler. He would try.

To Ahalya Bai he wrote : "Thou art a woman, too frail for the onerous burden of ruling a great State. Thy religious duties will be interfered with. The people of Indore will not obey a woman, and how canst thou lead thy soldiers to war ? Let a male child of thy race be put upon the throne, and throw the burden of the responsibility upon me, thy willing servant." Then covertly he added ; "If this be not done, enemies will beset thee on all sides, and how shall a woman meet them ?"

Replied Ahalya Bai : "I am the wife of a Rājâ, the mother of another ; how then should I set a third over myself ? I will rule, and none other, unless it please me to put another on the throne." Then treacherously wrote Gangâdhâr

to the Peshwā: "Come with an army and take this kingdom; but a weak woman rules it."

Rāḍho, an uncle of the Peshwā, greedily accepted the proposal.

When Ahalya Bai heard all this she wrote to him, saying: "Evil will be the fruit of these thy foolish deeds. This kingdom is mine, and mine it will remain." Rāḍho swore angrily: "Malhar Rao was but a servant of the Peshwā, and now this haughty widow of his son has grown so arrogant. But I will humble her pride."

Ahalya Bai called her Sardārs to secret conclave. In the great durbār hall they gathered. Strong, brave men they were, warriors old and young and richly dressed. Through the many-colored windows poured rich warm light, and glowed upon each eager face as it lighted to passionate fervor for their Queen. And the state-ly Queen, on whose face shone a light divine, smiled upon her loyal knights, and thanked them deeply for their devotion to the realm. To Bhonsla, to Māḍho of Sindhia, to the Gaekwar, went out the call for help, and Tukoji made all Indore's army ready for the fray. Promptly the Gaekwar sent 20,000 men, and Bhonsla marched at once to Indore and sent messengers saying: "Behold, I am at thy command." And Sindhia

sent his men to uphold the Queen. Râdho came, led by the treacherous Gangâdhâr to a place of vantage. Great was his astonishment to find a vast army in battle array awaiting him. He was puzzled. He had expected a terrified woman, and instead he saw the fine army encamped before him. To go back was cowardly; to go forward meant destruction. He regretted his hasty avarice. At last he sent to Tukoji :

"Hearing of the death of Mâlî Rao, I have come to offer my respect and my help to his widowed mother. You face me as foe, thinking perhaps that I have come to offer battle."

"If your errand is one of peace, prove it," answered Tukoji.

With a few attendants Râdho rode to the camp of Tukoji, who, when he saw him coming thus, rode out alone to meet him, and escorted him to the camp. Then Râdho went on to meet Ahalya Bai, and stayed long with her, watching in astonishment how marvellously well she managed her kingdom. Ask what question he would on statecraft, she gave clear convincing replies.

The usual routine of Ahalya Bai's daily life was to rise early and perform her pûjâ, then to read from the *Mahâbhârata* or the *Râmâyana*. Then with her own hands she fed Brâhmanâs

and the poor. After taking her own food and a little rest, she went to the durbâr, where all the rest of the day was spent, attending to the many duties that a ruler must perform.

All who came were admitted to an audience. At sunset she withdrew for the evening pûjâ and to take refreshment. Then the ministers came, till eleven o'clock, to settle many matters, to solve difficult problems the day had brought forth, and to arrange the next day's work.

On all sides of her realm raged warfare between the fierce Mahrâthas, the dogged Jâts and Rohillas, the thieving Pindâris and many another people ; but within the confines of Indore all was peace.

Once when Tukoji went out against Jaipur to enforce the settlement of a debt, he was beaten, and sent to Ahalya Bai for money and for men. "This you shall have, but no more," she sent him word ; "Fight and win. If you are afraid, I myself will come to lead the army." She was then fifty-eight years of age. At the time of the death of Malhar Rao sixteen crores of rupees lay in the Treasury. When Ahalya Bai found that the revenues of the kingdom were sufficient to cover all needs, she dedicated the money to the service of Shri Krishna. Râdho was in need, and he knew of the vast wealth stored in Indore,

so he sent her message : " I am in sore straits. From thy Treasury send me what I need," and he named a large sum. But Ahalya Bai answered : " The wealth that has lain so long untouched in the Treasury has been dedicated to Shri Kṛishṇa ; I can take nothing from it, save in His service. Thou art a Brāhmaṇa ; if thy need is great, I will send thee charity."

Rādhō was angry at the reply, and more so that she should think him a begging Brāhmaṇa. " I am no beggar," he wrote, " to receive thy charity, and I come to take what I need." Ahalya prepared to meet him. She dressed herself in armor and went out to the battle-field with five hundred women attendants, but not a single man.

" Where is the army ? " demanded Rādhō.

" In olden days we were the servitors of the Peshwās," answered Ahalya Bai, " how then could we fight against one of them ? If I am killed by thee, then my wealth is at thy command ; otherwise not a pice is yours ; for dharma is the greatest treasure of all, and that I will not lose."

Rādhō was ashamed, and, after remaining for a time with Ahalya Bai, went away.

This great ruler in Indore encouraged all within her realm to do their best. Merchants produced their finest cloths, trade flourished, the

farmers were at peace, and oppression ceased, for each case that came to the Queen's notice was dealt with severely. She loved to see her people prosper, and to watch the fine cities grow, and to know that her subjects were not afraid to display their wealth, lest the ruler should snatch it from them. Far and wide the roads were planted with shady trees, and wells were made, and rest-houses for travellers. The poor, the homeless, the orphaned were all helped according to their needs. The Bhils, who had long been the torment of all caravans, were routed from their mountain fastnesses, and persuaded to settle down as honest farmers. Hindu and Musulmān alike revered the famous Queen and prayed for her long life. Her last great sorrow was when her daughter became a Sati upon the death of Jaswant Rao. Ahalya Bai was seventy years old when her long and splendid life closed. Indore long mourned its noble Queen; happy indeed had been her reign, and her memory is cherished with deep reverence unto this day.



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